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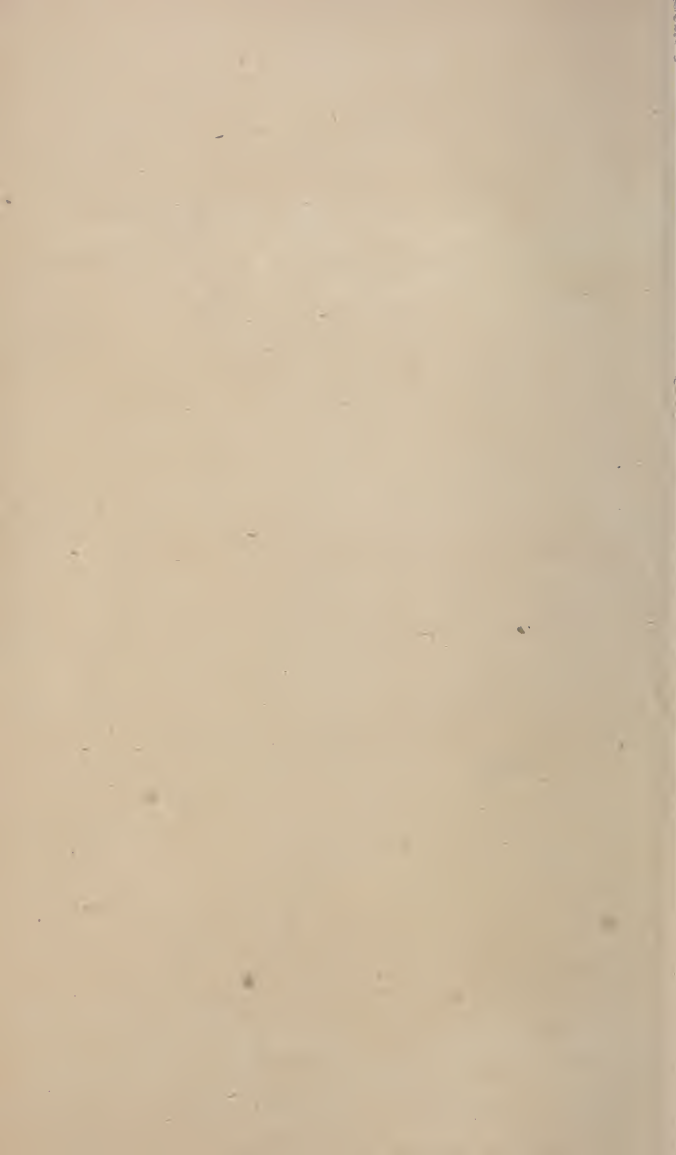
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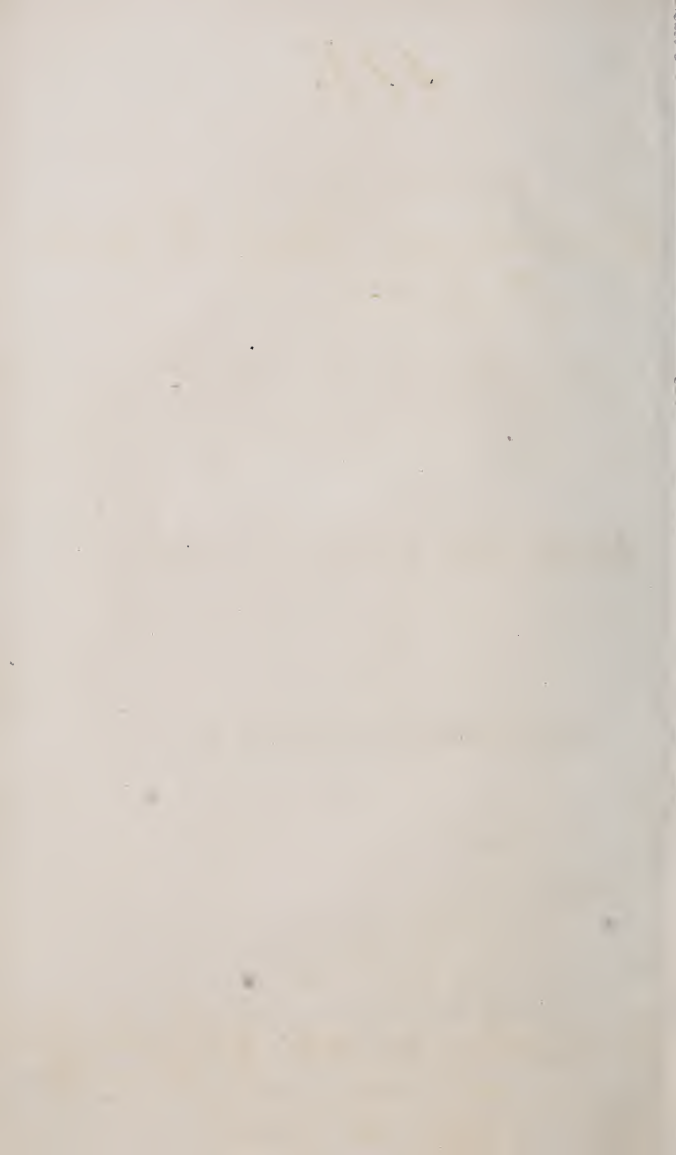
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FROM THE WORD OF GOD.

BY

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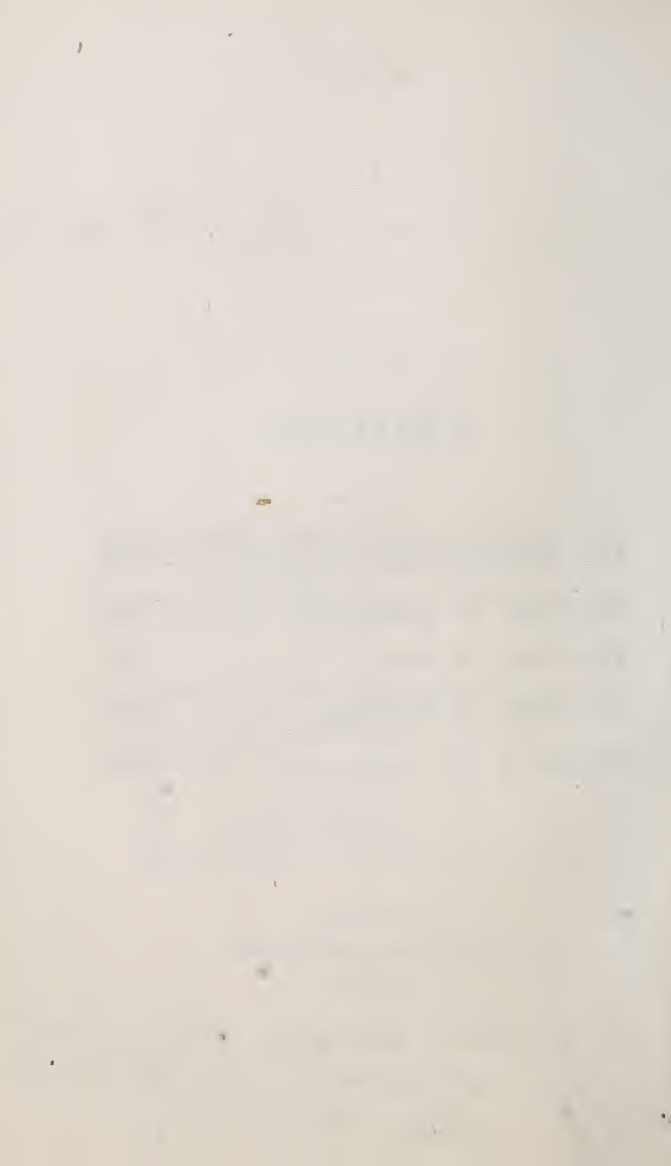
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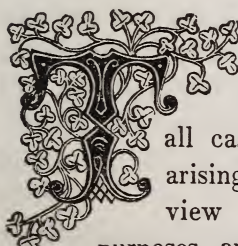
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The Faith of Abel.

THE FAITH OF ABEL.

“By faith, Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts.” HEBREWS, xi, 4.



THE faith of all believers is the same in its objects and elements. In all cases, it is trust in God, arising from an evangelical view of His perfections and purposes, and embraces the conviction of sin and the hope of forgiveness through Christ, the great sacrifice for sin, and the only mediator between God and man. In all cases it is “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen;” demonstration amounting to certainty, of the

truth of all that God has revealed and promised. In all cases it draws its motives from eternal things, and makes the things of this life subservient to these. It is always a principle that purifies the heart and reforms the conduct, and brings every feeling and passion of the soul to the obedience of Christ. It prepares all who are sanctified by it, for duty. It imparts to all who possess it, strength in the hour of trial and conflict. There is but one faith, as there is but one Lord, and that centres in Christ, and radiates from him, through all the dispositions of the soul and through all the actions of the life.

But as the circumstances of every believer differ in some respects from those of every other, and as one day's experience in the case of the same individual, varies from that of another; so are the manifestations of faith, continually presented in some new light. The duties and temptations of to-day

may not be like those of yesterday. The duties of the child differ from those of the parent; of the governed, from those who govern. One man may be tempted by adversity, and another by prosperity to forget God. So every age of the church has its own experience, giving to the general faith of every era a somewhat peculiar and new development. Thus the faith of the martyrs in the primitive age of Christianity, displayed itself chiefly in meek endurance; that of the Reformers, in bold resistance; that of the present age, mainly in efforts to bring together the separate members of the body of Christ, and concentrate the power of the whole body in opposing formalism and infidelity, and in pushing on the conquests of the Son of God throughout the whole Earth.

Whilst, therefore, it is true that the manifestations of Christian faith are almost endless in variety; while it is true that every

man's experience, differing in some respects from the experience of every other man, will impart to the exhibitions of his faith, an aspect somewhat peculiar; it is also true, that there is enough of similarity in the experience of all believers, to make the practical display of every one's faith, a matter of interest to every other. For while our temptations and spiritual conflicts, our doubts, our fears, and our duties may vary in outward form, they agree in their general character. "The world, the flesh, and the devil," are the enemies with whom all have to wrestle, and therefore the victory which every believer's faith gains over these enemies, whatever be the manner of their assault, must afford both instruction and encouragement to every other member of the household of faith. The experience of Abel, and Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, and Moses was extraordinary. The history of each of these servants of God forms an

epoch by itself; connected as they were with great events, and called to be prominent actors in some of the most remarkable movements of Jehovah that have ever occurred in the world, we find that they differed in the outward manifestations of their faith, from each other, and from all who have since walked in the same path of self denial. And yet their faith was the same, both in its objects and elements. They were actuated by the very same principle, in all that they did and in all that they endured, which enables every believer, even the most obscure, to repent, and love, and trust, and suffer, and obey, according to the will of God; so that, although far removed from ourselves in the events with which they were associated, and in the extraordinary displays of faith which these events demanded, we may nevertheless learn profitable lessons from their examples.

In the passage that stands at the head of

this illustration, the faith of Abel is contrasted with the unbelief of Cain; and we are led,

I. To inquire, in what respects their offerings differed; what were the characteristics of the faith of the one, and what were the characteristics of the unbelief of the other? The record contained in Genesis iv, 3, 4, throws light upon this question. There we read that "in process of time Cain brought of the fruit of the ground, an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect."

Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. This, we think, describes with sufficient clearness, the nature of his faith. We have reason to suppose, that God made to Adam and his immediate

descendants, a plain discovery of the plan of redemption through the death of his Son, and that he appointed the shedding of blood as the prophetic type of that event. When the promise was given, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, there must have been connected with that promise, an intimation sufficiently clear of the nature of the deliverance that was to be accomplished. Man was probably told at the beginning, so as to be able to understand, that without the shedding of blood, there could be no remission of sin.

Afterwards, we find Noah building an altar unto the Lord, and offering thereon sacrifices of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl. And again we find Abraham prepared to sacrifice his own son at the command of God, and when that command was revoked, a substitute was provided by an arrangement of God himself, and this was sacrificed instead. The inference from

all this, and much more that might be said in connection with this subject, is, that our first parents were required to sacrifice animals, and offer them to the Lord. This was to be the act of their faith in the promised Messiah. Abel had that faith, and therefore in obedience to the divine requirement, and in reliance upon that plan of salvation, which was indicated and prefigured in the shedding of blood, he brought of the firstlings of his flock.

Cain brought of the fruit of the ground as *an offering of acknowledgment* to the Lord. Probably this also was expressly commanded, for we find both the sin offering and the offering of the first fruits, in the worship of the Jews. The latter was the confession of God's universal providence. But in the Jewish worship, even when the first fruits were presented to the Lord, a lamb was to be offered at the same time; and this seemed to imply that even the pro-

vidential care of God was to be ascribed to the appointment of a Saviour. It indicated that the entire government of the world, had been placed in the hands of Christ. It was intended to guard against any diversion of the mind from God's plan of reconciliation. And had the Jewish priest waived the sheaf of barley before the Lord, without presenting on that same day a lamb for a burnt offering, it would have been a virtual rejection of the atonement.

This will enable us to understand in what respect the sacrifice of Abel was more excellent, or, as it may be rendered, *more complete*, than that of Cain. He brought, it is commonly believed, both of the fruits of the ground and the firstlings of his flock; or if he brought only the latter, he acknowledged thereby that the entire government of the world was thenceforth to be conducted on mediatorial principles; he confessed his own sins, and admitted the necessity of the

shedding of blood, to their remission. He saw and deprecated his exposure to divine wrath, and looked for deliverance to that "seed of the woman" who was to bruise the serpent's head.

Cain, on the other hand, recognized the creative energy, and providential oversight of God, and human obligation arising therefrom; but whilst his offering was an acknowledgment of the divine agency in the productiveness of the Earth, it appears to have been a denial of man's inability to justify himself. The shedding of blood for the remission of sin, appears to have been, to his mind, an absurdity unworthy of belief.

1. Our first inference from this portion of our subject is, that those who believe, must indicate their faith in the way which God has appointed. We have spoken of the sacrifice which Abel offered to the Lord, as the only proper, and the indispensable ex-

pression of his faith. By this he commemorated the sacrifice that *was to be* offered on the cross. And what we desire to enforce here is, the duty that still rests upon all, to commemorate the sacrifice that *has been* offered on the cross. When our Lord abolished the Mosaic ritual, as having answered its end, he appointed two sacraments, which were to be observed as the outward expression of the believer's faith, throughout all time. These were Baptism and the Lord's Supper; the one as the seal of God's covenant with his people, and the emblem of their sanctification; and the other, as a public acknowledgment of the believer's trust in the death of Christ, for the pardon of his sins. The cup of blessing in the Lord's Supper, is the communion of the blood of Christ; the bread which we break, is the communion of the body of Christ. It is the public acknowledgment of those obligations under which the sacrificial death of Christ

has placed us. It is a recognition of those privileges and hopes, which that event has secured. We are to remember here, that the Lord's supper is a divine appointment; that it bears historical reference to the same event, which was prophetically set forth in the offering of Abel; so that our obligation to observe it must be as binding and positive, as was the obligation of the Jew to offer burnt sacrifices to God; and where evangelical faith exists, it must necessarily, we think, find its outward expression in this form. I speak to those who have never made a public profession of religion, and who are flattering themselves that they may believe without it, and that this profession is not necessary to their salvation. Must not the public profession of Christ be the first act which faith desires to perform?

Is it possible to love the Saviour and trust in him, and to have the full tide of his grace and power flowing in upon the soul,

and yet coldly abstain from the public acknowledgment of his atoning death and effectual mediation? Is there not cause to fear, that all those pleas which many urge as a reason for their refusal, thus to do public homage to Christ, are the pleas of unbelief; that while they are prepared to confess the universal providence of God, they are not prepared to embrace the scheme of redemption, and have never exercised an humble, trusting reliance upon the blood that was shed for sin. We do not say, that it is impossible for an individual to possess a justifying faith, and yet refrain for months, perhaps for years, from the public acknowledgment of his indebtedness to Christ; but we do say that his faith, if it is real, lacks a very important evidence, and that he can not be fully satisfied of its genuineness until he has given it expression, in the form of which we are now speaking.

The same consideration should press upon

the minds of those who *have* professed Christ and his gospel before men, but who have neglected his ordinances. When members of the church absent themselves from the table of the Lord, the question arises, where is their faith? Have they ceased to be sinners, or have they forgotten that they always stand in equal need of the Saviour's mediation? Such neglect should awaken thoughtfulness and serious concern, and it is a question which every one who is guilty of it, ought to answer in the light of his own conscience and the word of God; whether a neglect like this, does not render nugatory all the prayers, and all the services with which he attempts to approach his Maker. It is impossible to conceive how that prayer can reach Heaven, which does not proceed from a soul that is ever ready to make public confession of its sins, and public acknowledgment of the entire reliance of all its hopes upon Christ.

2. We have also in this portion of our subject, the revelation of an important principle, and that is, all our offerings to God must recognize the atonement, or be rejected. This, as has been shown, was probably the reason why the Lord had not respect unto the offering of Cain. He had faith, but it was not evangelical faith. He was a believer in creation and providence, but not in redemption. He was willing to acknowledge God as a Sovereign, but not as a Saviour.

As then, so now, God will accept no worship that is not presented through Christ as the mediator of the new covenant. The doctrine of the Bible, is, that the whole government of the world is conducted on principles of mercy, as they have been displayed on Calvary. It is a question whether the world would now exist, had not God conceived and resolved to carry out the plan of establishing upon it, the kingdom of his

grace; and if he sends his rain on the just and on the unjust, and causes his Sun to shine on the evil and the good, and if the fields yield their increase, we are to ascribe the beneficent operation of the laws of nature to the fact, that God in Christ is carrying on the plan of reconciliation. His long suffering and kindness, all his providential bounties, as well as the direct agency of the Spirit, are designed to bring the soul in humility, and repentance, and faith, to the cross. Now, men may attempt to worship God as a sovereign—they may acknowledge his power, and his wisdom, and his providential goodness, and they may pretend to worship him as the God of nature; all such acknowledgements will be vain. “No man cometh unto the Father,” says Jesus, “but by me.” “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.” Vain indeed will be the efforts of those who attempt to gain the favor of God, in some other way than by an

humble trust in the Redeemer of the world; who perhaps bring their morality to God and ask him to accept of that, or, in some other form, present a Christless offering. Morality is demanded, but it must be the tribute of a heart that has been washed in the blood of Jesus, and is grateful for his love. The sacrifice of a broken and a contrite spirit is demanded, and this is to be presented on the ground of Christ's purchase. The gold and the silver are demanded, and these gifts are to be offered to God as an acknowledgment of what Christ has done. If we contribute even towards the spread of the Gospel ever so liberally, merely for the purpose of distributing its temporal advantages, leaving Christ and the blessings of his salvation out of our estimate, God will frown upon the offering, although he may employ the means that have been furnished for the advancement of his own glory.

Without the recognition of Christ as the Redeemer of the world, "Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor are the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering." What renders the gold and the incense of Sheba worthy of honorable mention in prophecy is, that they shall be consecrated to Christ. The motive of every thing that is done for God, to be well pleasing to him, must be drawn from the Cross—the glory must center there. Our prayers must be offered to God through Christ. Our repentance must have reference to that forgiveness which he has purchased. Our benevolence must aim at the erection of the kingdom of Christ, among all nations and in every heart. A Christless prayer and a Christless repentance, if that were possible, and every gift which is not presented with reference to the honor of the Son of God, will be counted as nothing, and altogether vanity.

II. The next feature mentioned in the

faith of Abel is, that by it *he obtained witness that he was righteous*. God testified to him, that his offerings were accepted. What was the nature of this testimony, we are left to conjecture. The probability is, that fire was sent down from Heaven to consume the sacrifice. For this token of divine acceptance was given to Aaron immediately after his consecration to the priestly office; "there came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering." This signified the turning away of God's wrath, which is described as a consuming fire, from the sinner to the sacrifice. So at the dedication of the temple, "when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from Heaven, and consumed the burnt offerings and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house." (2 Chron. vii, 1.) And when Elijah undertook to prove the absurdity of the worship of Baal, it was agreed that the God who

“answered by fire,” was to be acknowledged as the true God. But whatever was the nature of the testimony in the case before us, it was conclusive; Abel obtained witness that he was righteous.

And our remark here is, that true faith is always accompanied by the testimony of divine approbation. It belongs to it, just as light belongs to the Sun. The believer hath the witness in himself, and that witness is the work of the Lord in his own soul.

The meaning of the passage before us, hinges on the word “*righteous*.” If we understand in what sense this was true of Abel, and in what sense it is true of all believers, we shall also understand how the approving testimony of God is obtained. The word does not signify that Abel possessed by nature a character more holy than that of his brother. Nor did he lay claim to any superiority in this respect, for the

very offering which he presented, was a confession of his sinfulness.

We are therefore to understand the word *righteous* here in the evangelical sense. Abel obtained witness that he was justified, purified, and accepted. In this sense, the term applies equally to all believers. They have the righteousness of faith—justifying righteousness through the death of Christ, obtained by faith in his atonement—and personal holiness through the operation of the word and spirit of Christ. Thus when Paul is speaking of justification by faith, he says: “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness.” And again he refers to the testimony of David, “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” This phraseology is sufficiently plain.

How then may the believer know that he

is justified by faith in the Son of God? On what does that evidence rest, which enables him to regard it as a matter settled beyond all doubt, that the price of his redemption has been paid and accepted, and that he has now as clear and safe a title to Heaven, as if sin had never blighted his prospects, and he had always obeyed the divine law?

This evidence depends, first, upon the veracity of God, combined with his infinite wisdom. God has promised that whosoever believeth on his Son, shall have eternal life. And shall he not perform? Surely he will, unless he has been deceived in regard to the workings of his own plan; unless he has discovered some defect in its adaptation to the great ends of his moral government. But this can not be, because his wisdom has traced the scheme of human redemption in all its bearings. He knew, before it was adopted in the counsels of eternity, that it would carry out the purposes of his moral

administration in the world, just as completely, as if mankind had been left without a remedy, to suffer the consequences of their guilt.

But again, the believer knows that he is justified and accepted, because the Holy Spirit has taken up its abode in his heart. Sin has been dethroned, and the work of his moral purification is continually going on. The fire *has* come down from Heaven to consume every unholy passion and every lust. The Spirit, by its sanctifying presence in the soul, is bearing witness with his spirit, that he is a child of God, and if a child, then an heir, an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ. He has received the spirit of adoption, and must therefore be entitled to all the rights and privileges of adoption. This is a kind of evidence by which he can not be deceived.

We sometimes hear those who profess to believe, say that they have no assurance of

the divine favor and acceptance. But the question arises, whether justifying faith is ever separated from that assurance? If the faith that justifies, also purifies the sinner, is it possible that it should exist without a witness? Is the change from death to life, from sin to holiness, from the love of the world to the love of God, so imperceptible as to leave no impression on the believer's mind, no persuasion amounting to assurance, that he is a joint heir with Christ? Has lust been consumed, and passion restrained, and has the soul, contrary to its own depraved nature, been filled with breathings after holiness; and are all its powers, thus brought into a new channel by the converting energy of the Divine Spirit, diligently pushing on towards the attainment of still higher degrees of conformity with the divine image? Surely, a process so wonderful; an alteration of purpose, and of every principle of conduct, so great as to

deserve the name of a new creation, must be a matter of consciousness to the individual in whom the mighty change is wrought.

Then there are all the antecedent exercises of the mind—the thoughts turning to God—the conviction of inherited depravity and of actual sinfulness—the soul pressing its way with its burden to the cross; surely, if God has conducted the sinner through all this, and has fixed his wandering and alienated affections upon himself, he has without doubt obtained a witness that he possesses the righteousness of faith. If God has made him personally holy, he may rest assured that the law's demands have been cancelled—that its curse has been turned away. For it is a conclusion to which we are inevitably brought by all our conceptions of the divine benevolence, independent of the express declarations of scripture on this point, that God would not prepare the soul

for Heaven and then close the entrance—that if sin has been robbed of its dominion, its victim is saved.

Now we are aware that when this evidence of the believing sinner's justification is sufficiently clear to satisfy other minds, there may be in his own mind occasional fears, like the clouds that sometimes interpose between the Earth and the Sun; but there must be at the same time a settled and prevailing assurance, like the light of the Sun, which, though obscured partially by intervening and overshadowing clouds, can not be extinguished, but is still distinctly seen. We are aware that when the believer looks at the dark side of his own character and experience; when he thinks of his unfaithfulness in the service of Christ, and of the corruption which still adheres to him; when he remembers the defects of his zeal, and the coldness of his prayers, and the imperfection that clings to all his services; he

feels as Paul felt when taking a similar review, and his soul cries out: "O wretched man that I am." With David, the believer is often troubled and bowed down greatly on account of sin, and goes mourning all the day long. Such emotions, such clouds and darkness, are perfectly consistent with the loftiest grade of piety attainable on Earth; for the more holy the soul becomes, the more sensitive will it be in regard to the corruption that still remains within it. But these agitations of the mind—these storms and tempests of distrust, which sometimes sweep over the soul of the believer, are followed by the calm and the sunshine of sweet assurance, when he remembers what God has wrought—when he compares himself as he is, striving after heavenly honors and resolutely wrestling with sin, with himself as he was, the willing captive of sin, paying voluntary homage to the world and the flesh—and when besides this

he thinks of the perfect righteousness of Christ. One look at the cross speaks peace to his troubled spirit; and with the eye of his faith fixed upon the perfect sacrifice that was there offered, he knows that if God spared not his own Son, he will also with him freely give all things to those who believe on his name.

We have been speaking all along of those who are eminently, or at least unquestionably, pious; of those who have no reason to doubt the reality of their faith. There are different degrees of assurance, as there are different degrees of holiness; nor is the full assurance of faith given to that piety which barely exists, or to that which is stationary. *Progression* in holiness is indeed an important witness, and we may perhaps safely add, an essential witness in favor of the believer's justification. Where there is no progress, there is room for doubt; and where there is a low state of piety, which can

hardly be distinguished from the worldliness of the unrenewed, there is room for doubt. If you have not the witness of the Spirit, that demonstration which inspires the confident belief of having obtained the favor of God, and the pardon of sin and complete justification through the righteousness of Christ, then perhaps it is because you have not the Spirit itself. The Spirit can not bear witness to the soul in which it does not reside. And your having no testimony of acceptance, may be owing to the fact of your not having complied with the terms of acceptance. Or perhaps your piety is just at the point of extinguishment. It may be flickering now, and ready to expire, and in its last struggles for existence; there is no wonder then that you look in vain for the testimony that you are a child of God and an heir of his kingdom.

In all cases of decided piety, where the practical exercises of a living faith are

clearly exhibited, we think, we may safely say, that every believer obtains a witness that he is righteous. Wherever the work of regeneration is plainly accomplished, and the work of sanctification is plainly going on, there is clear testimony of the divine favor and acceptance. This is that fire which comes down from Heaven; and neither did Abel receive a more explicit testimony from on high that God was pleased with his offering—nor Aaron of the validity of his consecration to the priestly office—nor the children of Israel in the time of Elijah, that the God whose worship they had abandoned was the only true God—than is given to every believer when the Spirit descends upon his soul, and consumes within it all those tendencies which separate it from God.

It is an interesting thought, that the Holy Spirit and its office are likened to fire and its action. When the Spirit descended upon

the apostles, it came in the form of "cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them." The forerunner of Christ testified of him: "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire," or, *as* with fire. When fire miraculously provided, consumed the sacrifices, it was therefore emblematic of the descent of the Spirit upon the hearts of believers. To this we are to look as the testimony which God now gives his children, of his favor and love. When the Holy Spirit comes down, and kindles the love of God in the soul of the believer, then, and in this manner does God bear witness that his sins are forgiven, and that his offering of a contrite heart is accepted.

Two practical thoughts remain to be considered.

1. The example of Abel, teaches us to look well for the witness. If we have offered our hearts to God, he has sent down fire from Heaven, not to consume us, but to

purify these hearts, and the process must be even now going on. Be not deceived. Rest not your hopes upon any other faith than that which purifies the heart, and works by love. A faith that has not this power; a faith that comes short of this demonstration, must administer a false hope, if any, to the soul.

Seek the witness, if you have it not; endeavor to obtain the full assurance that you have made your peace with God, through Jesus Christ. If you may have the assurance of faith, why be satisfied without it? If there is a faith that brings to the mind of him who entertains it, the full persuasion of the divine favor and forgiveness, why not labor to secure that faith? Is the Spirit of the Lord now bearing witness with your spirit, that you are the children of God? Or, if you entertain doubts on this point, whence do they arise? We know that some appear to be in darkness all their days; and

we know too that the piety of some is not a growing piety—that it barely lives, if it lives at all—and where these two circumstances meet in the same individual, we may regard them as cause and effect. A dull sluggish piety can not be associated with joy unspeakable, and a lively hope. Growth in grace, is necessary to the well established assurance of salvation.

2. The example of Abel encourages us to trust the great Propitiation, and warns us against trusting any thing else. Every hope that rests not there, is without a solid foundation. All human substitutes will be rejected.

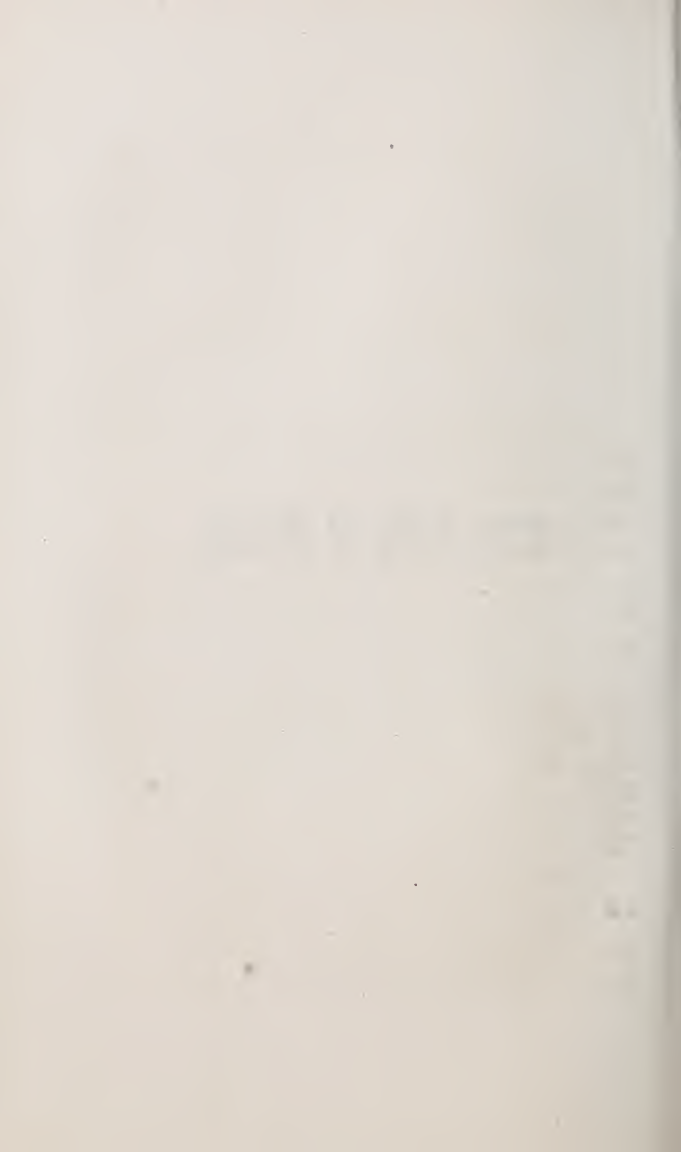
In a word, we are directed to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel. The blood of Abel called from the ground for vengeance—the blood of Christ pleads that vengeance may be stayed. Without Christ, the universe is to the sinner a blank, or rather a hell, re-

plete with the elements of wrath. Without him, God is nothing to the sinner but a consuming fire. If you would be saved, you must not only admire God as a Sovereign, but you must repent before him as a Father ready to forgive; you must believe in him as a Saviour; you must submit to him as a Sanctifier; you must be justified on the terms of the gospel. It is the heart which God demands, and this must be given to Christ. Offer this sacrifice, and you will have the testimony that you are righteous. Withhold the heart from Christ, and deny your obligation, and refuse your allegiance to him, and every other acknowledgement will be utterly vain. For he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. You may come with tears, without this acknowledgement, but they will not avail. The language of the justified sinner is:

“In my hand no price I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling.”


Let the sinner thus come—let him bring to God the sacrifice of a broken and a contrite heart, and lay it down at the cross, and God will testify of his gift, and he will have the witness that he is righteous. He will have the indwelling witness of a trusting, purifying faith, moulding his character and fitting him for Heaven.

The Faith of Enoch.



THE FAITH OF ENOCH.

“By faith, Enoch was translated, that he should not see death; and was not found because God had translated him; for before his translation, he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith, it is impossible to please him, for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” HEBREWS, xi, 5, 6.

LTHOUGH the individual whose faith is described in the passage which stands at the head of this illustration, occupies a conspicuous place in the world's history, yet the account which the scripture gives of him is very brief. The genealogical record in Genesis informs us that he was the seventh from Adam, and the great grand-

father of Noah; and from Jude we learn that he was a prophet, and foretold the coming of the Lord, "with ten thousand of his saints," to convince the wicked of their ungodliness, and to execute judgment upon all who should despise his warning voice. From this we gather, that on account of the exceeding and growing iniquity of mankind, at that period, God appointed Enoch a preacher of righteousness, to admonish that sinful generation, and leave no excuse for their impiety. But all the threatenings he was commanded to deliver, were disregarded, and the waves of iniquity rolled on, and gathered strength, until in the days of Noah, the suspended judgment was suffered to descend, and all the scoffers and revilers of God were swept from the Earth.

But the most remarkable circumstance connected with the history of Enoch, is, that when he was three hundred and sixty-five years old, he was taken from the world

in such a way as not to see death. From the account given in Genesis, it is not easy to determine the mode of his departure; for it is there related simply, that, "Enoch walked with God, and he was not; for God took him." This may be said of every good man who leaves the world in the ordinary manner. Some of the Rabbins, indeed, contended for this interpretation. But the language of Paul is plain, and removes every doubt. He informs us, that the translation of Enoch was extraordinary; that God, by a miraculous interposition of his almighty power, removed him from Earth to Heaven.

This is one of the occurrences on which, as on all the miracles of the Bible, skepticism rests an objection. The rejecter of revelation pretends to consider this event an impossibility, because it varies from the general experience of mankind. But an objection based upon such a reason as this, is evidently fallacious, because it takes for

granted, that no circumstances could possibly occur, which would induce God to depart from his ordinary method of procedure; or else it limits his power to the channel in which his providence usually flows. But this is the very thing to be proved before a single miracle of the Bible can be touched. Admitting, what all who believe the existence of God must admit, that his wisdom might see reasons for departing from the customary and familiar order of his providential operations, and that his power is sufficient to accomplish all the purposes of his wisdom; admitting, in other words, the very first truth of natural religion, that there is a God, who is infinite in all his attributes, and that therefore nothing is impossible with him, it must also be admitted that he can and may perform other wonders beside those which are familiar to the eye of sense and the general experience of mankind.

Neither is it necessary to find a reason

why God should have acted in an extraordinary manner, in order to know that he has thus acted. It is enough to know that he is infinitely wise and good, and that all the displays of his power on the Earth have also been the displays of his infinite wisdom and goodness. It is enough to know that the Bible is a revelation from God—this is the ground of our belief in all the transactions it relates, whether we discern the reasons which led to them or not. But sometimes these reasons appear to lie so plainly on the surface that we may innocently surmise them, so long as our speculations are not derogatory to the divine perfections, and so long as they are in strict agreement with all the primary truths of revelation.

In reference to the translation of Enoch, we may suppose that it was partly intended to teach mankind that they were immortal and accountable, and that there would be a day of retribution, when their eternal state would

be determined according to the deeds done in the body.

So far as we can judge, iniquity made rapid strides after the fall, and the ungodly were probably encouraged at first in their evil ways, by the almost indefinite prolongation of human life. For centuries, death claimed no victim. It is true Abel had fallen by the hand of his brother. But this was an act of violence, which need not necessarily be repeated, and the impression may have prevailed that if man did not fall by the hand of his fellow man, he would never see death. Thus it is possible that the declaration of Satan: "Ye shall not surely die," by which man was lured from the path of obedience, gained credit, and that iniquity became bold and reckless in proportion to the strength of this conviction. At length, however, Adam died. But the wicked of that generation were startled from one capital error, only to stumble, in all probability, into

another. It is but a single step from one absurdity of unbelief to a greater absurdity still. Those who doubted whether man would ever pay that part of the forfeit of his disobedience: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," found it no hard matter, we may suppose, to believe that death was an everlasting sleep. It was only exchanging a groundless hope, which, in view of the threatening of God, and the sentence that followed the first act of disobedience, should never have been entertained; for an equally groundless despair, which the promise of God should have excluded from the mind. But if the false hope kindled the most unholy passions, the despair which followed only served to establish their dominion. The result in both cases was the same. Those who were encouraged by the hope of immunity from death, to give loose reins to their unsanctified desires, were driven by despair to the same extremity of

wickedness; and it needed only a slight change of words to express the determination to which they were brought by these opposite feelings. Whilst the one feeling tempted them to say: "Let us eat and drink for we shall never die;" the other prompted the language of defiance: "Let us eat and drink, and live as we list, for to-morrow we die."

It is well known how rapidly society degenerates, and how corrupt it becomes, if there prevails a disbelief of the immortality and future accountability of man. This we learn from the history of those nations and tribes among whom these doctrines are unknown, or very imperfectly understood. There must be a prevailing conviction that death is not an everlasting sleep, and that the present state of being is only the commencement of human existence, or there will not be even a tolerable condition of morals maintained in the world. There

must be a prevailing conviction that beyond this life there is a scene of retribution, or the whole history of mankind will be but a repetition of wrongs inflicted and wretchedness endured; and there would follow one degree of moral corruption after another, until the whole race would be sunk as low as when, before the deluge, their iniquity called for their almost total extermination. From the testimony that Jude bears to the wickedness of mankind in the time of Enoch, we have every reason to suppose that rank infidelity reigned, and that human accountability was lost sight of,—probably in the belief that death was annihilation, and that after death there would be no judgment. If such was the general opinion, the transaction mentioned in the passage which precedes this illustration was well calculated to correct it; for it could not have been witnessed—as it may have been by multitudes for aught we know to the con-

trary—without leaving the impression that man was immortal. We know not what influence the transaction may have had on that generation. On this point the word of God is silent. It may be that it had an important share in forming the piety of the descendants of the Patriarchs, and that of Noah among the rest.

We turn from this to a more practical point, when we say that there is a plain analogy between the translation of Enoch, and that translation which every believer experiences, even in this world, when he is brought out of spiritual death into spiritual life. What is the meaning of that declaration of the Saviour: “He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die?” Here we have faith as the condition, and preservation from death as the result. Is this preservation real, or is it figurative? Is it a mere shadow, or is

it a substantial blessing? Just as real it is, and just as substantial a blessing, as was the translation of Enoch from this to another world; and of far greater value than that event would have been, had it consisted merely in the translation of the body, without embracing also the everlasting deliverance of the soul from the penalty of sin. Of the believer, it may be truly said that he shall never die. What is death? It is the exclusion of the soul from happiness. It is the working of corruption within the soul; the fires of lust, and ambition, and avarice, tasking and consuming those energies which were made for the pure and noble employments of Heaven. It is the disposition to sin and rebel against God, that forms a part of the soul itself, above which it can not rise, and over which it can obtain no mastery. "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law." And when faith delivers the soul from the power of the one, and

invests it with the capability of rendering acceptable obedience to the other, then is there a change produced equal to that which was witnessed when "by faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death." If the one was a miracle, so is the other. If the one required an extraordinary interposition, so does the other.

What can be more extraordinary than those arrangements of infinite wisdom and love which demanded that he who was in the form of God, and who thought it not robbery to claim equality with God, should make himself of no reputation, and take upon him the form of a servant, and be made in the likeness of men; and being formed in fashion as a man, should humble himself still more, and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross? (Phil. ii, 8). What can be more extraordinary than that he whose name is Wonderful Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting

Father, and the Prince of Peace, should also be designated as a man of sorrows, upon whom the chastisement of our peace has been laid? What can be more extraordinary than the extremes of glory and suffering, of power and weakness, of divinity and humanity, that had to meet in him who undertook our redemption for us? Here, in the scheme of man's recovery from sin, is an intervention far transcending any physical wonder the world has ever seen.

And we see not how any one can witness the energy of faith displayed in the life of the believer, and yet hesitate to credit all the miracles which the Bible relates. There is no miracle equal to that miracle of grace by which the sinner recovers his proper position in the great circle of duty and influence, and by which he is made fit for Heaven. The laws of nature may be arrested in their course—the Sun may be made to stand still, and the dead may be raised—but we see

nothing in this more remarkable than that the whole tendency of the will and affections of the sinner should be changed, the current of human depravity arrested, and that process of moral corruption stayed, which, if suffered to go on, must bring upon the soul everlasting ruin. When the Redeemer rebuked the sea, and calmed the tempest, he performed not a greater wonder than when he said: "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee."

Faith, we say, is as powerful in its operation now, as it was in the translation of Enoch. It accomplishes miracles as great. It gives wings to the soul, and enables it to soar above the Earth and earthly things. It alters the settled and evil habits of the mind, and gives a right direction and a lofty elevation to its thoughts. It conquers selfishness and creates benevolence. It allows no one, who is governed by it, to live for himself alone. It subdues

the fierce passions of our nature, and imparts the power of self control. It brings peace and joy to the individual; and wherever its influence reaches, it brings peace and joy to the world. It dries up the dark fountains of human misery, and stays the fierce floods of licentiousness and crime, that have been sweeping so many ages over the Earth. The world owes all that is valuable in government, all that is generous in social intercourse, and all that is pure in morals, to the religion of the Bible. All political and social changes that have been really and permanently beneficial, are to be traced to this source. These are the miracles which faith has performed in every age of the church, and which are witnessed now. The experience of the world is continually adding to the force of this testimony. All history is but an accumulation of evidence in favor of the celestial origin and divine authority of the word of God.

To what new refuge of falsehood can infidelity now flee? Will it venture to deny that Christianity has ever made one true convert from sin to holiness? Will it venture to deny that the religion of the cross has ever raised one soul above the dominion of a selfish indifference to the welfare of others, and given it the expansion of a universal and self-denying sympathy? Circumscribed indeed must be the influence of any such attempt. Christianity needs no other monument than that which it is daily rearing by means of its own transforming energy. The church is the witness of its divinity, the living, speaking proof that it came down from the throne, and is invested with the authority of God. Every excellence of Christian character, every aspiration of Christian hope, every reliance of Christian faith, every performance of Christian activity, and every result of Christian faithfulness and zeal, is an argument which no sophistry can overturn.

But let us look at some of the elements of this faith, as they were displayed in the example before us.

We are told that before his translation, Enoch had this testimony, that he pleased God. And this is ascribed to his faith; for, the apostle adds, that without faith it is impossible to please him. The language of Moses, which means the same thing, is still more emphatic. He says: "Enoch walked with God." And this denotes the most perfect agreement, the closest familiarity of intercourse.

This then is one of the consequences of faith: it produces reconciliation. The controversy that exists between God and the sinner must be settled, or there can be no fellowship between them; for two can not walk together "except they be agreed" (Amos iii, 3). Faith establishes a confidence between God, as the sovereign, and man, as the subject of his government. The

two parties, who were before directly at variance in their sentiments and dispositions, have now the same mind.

And this reconciliation manifests itself in the constant communion of the soul with God.

Prayer is an expression of faith; it is the very habit of the soul in which faith resides. If we consider the relations which the believer sustains, we shall find it impossible to separate these relations from the duty of which we are now speaking. So sure is this criterion, that if any professing Christian should find himself destitute of the spirit of prayer, he may safely conclude that he is destitute also of the spirit of faith. The believer is a child of God in the strictest sense, possessing the regard and affection of a child; but how can the child who loves and is beloved, stay away from his father's presence? The believer is in a world of temptation, his pathway is filled up with

difficulties, and doubts and apprehensions necessarily beset him; how can he refuse to apply for light and strength to that Almighty friend who is both a counsellor and an ever present helper? The believer has the mind of Christ; and how fervent were his petitions on the mountain, in Gethsemane, and on the Cross. The believer knows that the world is to be converted in answer to prayer; therefore his pity for that world, and his confidence in the revealed purpose, and in the power of God, must make him a frequent intercessor at his throne. Talk not of piety without prayer. There is no such thing. To be prayerless is to be unbelieving. Let faith once enter the soul, and let the love of God, which goes along with it, once find its lodgment there, and prayer must become its habitual language. Hear David: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions."

Have you never prayed thus? Then you must be an unbeliever, both in your own sinfulness and in the goodness and power of the Almighty. Hear one of the Prophets, as he looked upon the desolations of Zion, and yet believed that God had mercy in store for his people: "O Lord revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy." Who can witness the church cold or oppressed; and with a faith that can scan her future glory and appreciate her future influence, and with a love capable of desiring both, can yet restrain the prayer that that glory may soon be revealed, and that the blessings of that influence may soon be experienced by the whole race of mankind.

The believer walks with God in his sanctuary. He loves to be there because God is there; and that is a remarkable inconsistency, when those who profess to be reconciled to

God by faith, neglect any of those ordinances which he has appointed as the means of holding converse with himself. And may not then the genuineness of that man's piety be suspected, who is a neglecter of public worship, or who communes not with God at the table which Christ has furnished with the memorials of infinite condescension and love? Is it any breach of the great law of Christian charity to look with mistrust upon that faith which contents itself with an occasional visit to the house of prayer, and which does not diligently improve all the means of grace as the means of its own invigoration? The walk of the believer with his God, is a visible walk. True, we can not see the breathings of the soul after larger measures of holiness; we can not witness those secret communings, of which no one is conscious but God and the soul itself. We admit that very much of the believer's intercourse with Heaven comes not before the eye of the

world; and we admit too, that ordinances may be observed whilst there is no fellowship of the soul with the Father and with his Son. But with all these admissions, it is still true, that the love of the sanctuary and its ordinances is an indispensable indication of faith. God himself has made this a test. He has commanded us to reverence his sanctuary. And when the Jews disobeyed this command—when they neglected the house and the worship and the ordinances of God, the channel of intercourse between them and Heaven was closed. That *was* the channel of intercourse. In his house, God promised to meet them; and when they neglected this, they neglected the principal medium of communion with the heavenly world. Then it was that the necessity arose of God's judgment against them. Then it was that he withdrew the visible signs of his presence from their midst. Go to the individual who is a neglecter of the sanc-

tuary and the ordinances of religion, and ask him whether he is conscious of walking with God; ask him whether he enjoys any of the comfort of that fellowship; and if he is honest, he will tell you, no. But you need not ask him. The sad truth of his alienation is written upon his abandonment of the place and the means of intercourse with Heaven. And how can he be conscious of walking with God, when it needs not his own confession to make it evident that he is walking with the world? How can he enjoy any of the comfort of fellowship with God, when there is not the fellowship itself?

This reconciliation which faith produces, is also displayed in the believer's obedience to the moral law of God. This law he understands as Christ has explained it. This law he endeavors to practice as Christ, in his own blameless life, has illustrated its precepts. Does he know that God is love, and that the Son of God came to execute

the purposes of divine compassion in the redemption of the lost? The same moral element glows in his breast, and the earnest desires of his benevolence break forth in active efforts to do good, thus fulfilling the command: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Does he know that God is holy? He endeavors to remove not only his actions, but his very thoughts as far as possible from the contaminations of sin. The controversy which he now has is with himself. The struggle to which he devotes all his powers and all his watchfulness, is with the yet unconquered sinfulness of his own nature. Does he know that God is true and just? The principles of truth and justice pervade and govern all his conduct. If the business which he is pursuing in life requires for its success either falsehood or injury to the rights of others, and he is called upon either to abandon his business or his principles, he does not hesitate which to choose; his busi-

ness may be substituted by another, but his principles he can not do without. When he witnesses the sinfulness of others, he is grieved, because God is dishonored. As the friend of God, he has learned to revere his character and honor his laws; and every contempt that is cast upon God and his requirements, he feels far more deeply than if it were cast upon himself.

Thus it is that the believer walks with God. The purposes of God are his purposes. The laws of God are his laws. After the mind of God he is continually striving. To know the will of God and to do it, are with him one and the same thing. If there is any single grief that presses upon his soul with greater weight than any other, or than all others combined, it is the grief awakened by the consciousness that sometimes God is not in all his thoughts. If there is any one prayer which finds its way to the throne of grace more frequently and fervently than others, it is.

“ O for a closer walk with God.”

This is the work of faith. This is its evidence.

But there is another point yet to be considered, and that is: that *the views which this faith entertains of the character of God, are very different from the views and representations of natural religion.* “ He that cometh to God,” says the apostle, “ must believe that he is, and that he is *a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*”

Now the existence of God is the very first truth of natural religion; and it might appear, without reflection, as though the bare acknowledgement of the being of the Almighty were all that evangelical faith comprehends. This, however, would be placing the rejecter of revelation on a footing with him who bows in submission and reverence to all its teachings. If it be possible for nature to argue conclusively to the mind that there is a first, great and all-creating cause, it

would be setting aside the necessity of a divine revelation altogether; and it would render needless the death and mediation of Christ; for those who refuse to believe the gospel, may still admit that there is a God.

What does Paul mean then, when he represents faith as consisting in the persuasion of the divine existence? The expression is qualified and explained by the very relations in which we find it. He is writing to those who are familiar with that peculiar manifestation which God has made of himself in the scenes of Calvary. He is writing to Christians, who, when they hear the mention of God's name, at once associate with it that display of his attributes which was exhibited in Christ.

Besides, the last clause of the verse is a qualification of what precedes it. This God on whom Christian faith fixes its regards and its hopes, "is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Now we contend that

natural religion can present no such view of the divine character as this. If it understood and could represent the character of God, as that character is displayed independent of the gospel; with all its teachings, it would be unable to discover any way in which God might be the rewarder of any one of the children of men.

Suppose that with the idea of the existence of God, natural religion were to associate the idea of his justice—of justice as God's law represents it: inflexible in its nature and uncompromising in its demands; what would be the only reward which *he* could expect who had a proper conception of that attribute, independent of the provisions of the gospel? In the world we see misery and pain. We see nations destroyed for their crimes, and individuals suffering the consequences of their guilt. And if natural religion is capable of drawing any conclusion from a state of things like this, what

else can it be than that all this misery only foreshadows the endless suffering of man as a sinner.

Suppose natural religion were to furnish to the mind a conception of the holiness of God. Not viewed through the medium of the gospel, this holiness must inevitably pronounce the sinner's condemnation; for he is unholy, and if there is not some plan of recovery from the moral pollution of his nature, he can have no fellowship with a Being in whose sight "the heavens are not clean."

On the principles of simple justice and holiness therefore, God can not be the rewarder of any of our race. Mercy must be combined with these. But how could mercy make satisfaction for the sinner's guilt, and eradicate the plague-spots that mark him as an outcast from heaven. This question brings us right to the gospel. No where else can we obtain the answer. No where

else is the way of finding God as a Being ready to forgive, pointed out.

When therefore the apostle speaks of believing that God is, he refers to that exhibition of his character and purposes which has been set forth in Jesus Christ. He would bring the sinner to the cross. He would have him concentrate his thoughts upon that wonderful manifestation in which mercy and truth have met together, and righteousness and peace have kissed each other. There he would have him catch the spirit of unreserved consecration to the will of his divine Benefactor. Thus alone can we honor God, by resting our hopes upon the Great Sacrifice which on Calvary was offered for sin. There is no other way of reconciliation. There are no other conditions of peace. God in Christ may forgive; God out of Christ can only punish. There is no sanctifying power in any faith that stops short of this.

It remains for you to say whether you are thus walking with God. It remains for you to say whether at the cross of Christ you have received the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and whether the fruits of your moral renovation are displayed in the actions of a holy and useful life. If you are walking with God, your daily repentance and your daily prayers, and your attention to all the means of grace, together with your progressive holiness will be the attestation of your faith. If you are walking with God, and if you enjoy the bliss of that communion, you will not be able to look with unconcern upon those who are walking with the world. You will labor for their salvation. You will endeavor to draw them by the force of your own example into the fellowship of the saints, and into the household of God. From Calvary your eye will take in all the varied interests of the human race, and all the varied evils that conflict with those interests.

You will see the world as he saw it, who came to rescue it from the curse of sin. Like him, you will go about doing good. Like his, your mission will be to scatter blessings in your path.

But remember that the very first purpose in which you are to cöoperate with God, is your own salvation. Until you secure this, you can not enter heartily and truly into his other plans, or work with him acceptably in their prosecution. Some think they are commending themselves to the favor of God when they contribute their money toward the advancement of a kingdom to which they do not themselves belong. But this can not be; for without faith, it is impossible to please him, and the very first act of faith, that act without which it can not exist, is to seek forgiveness in Christ. Be sure then first of all, that you have this faith. If you have not found the Savior, diligently seek him until you are conscious of the presence

and power of his renovating grace. Then all the rest will follow. Thus united to Christ, you will feel the power of his constraining love urging you on in the path of self-denial. Your work on Earth, will be the work of faith. Your reward in Heaven, will be the reward of faith. And your eternity will be spent in ascribing all the praise of your fidelity, and all the glory of your salvation unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever.

The Faith of Noah.

THE FAITH OF NOAH.



IN the first epistle of Peter, iii, 19, 20, there is a remarkable passage, which proves the identity of the church and the means of salvation before and since the flood. In that passage we are informed that Christ preached by Noah. What was the precise message which this “preacher of righteousness” was appointed to convey to the wicked of his generation, we are not told;

but it must have been the offer of pardon, on certain conditions, and one of these conditions must have been faith in the threatenings and promises of God; threatenings based upon human guilt—the violation of a law requiring the punishment of the guilty; and promises based upon a provision which had been made to satisfy the law's demands. It is not for us to say how clearly, at that time, God's purposes in Christ were revealed. But we may suppose that both "the goodness and severity of God" were declared with sufficient plainness. The cup of human iniquity was full. In the conflict that had been going on ever since the fall, between irreligion and godliness, between infidelity and truth, the former had so far prevailed as to leave only a single family free from the almost universal contamination. But even at this crisis of the world's progress in evil, mercy plead for a respite. Then followed a period of expostulation, which lasted one hundred and twenty years;

during this period, the faith of Noah, and the unbelief of the rest of mankind, were alike apparent. Noah was saved by faith—faith acting in obedience to its own convictions. Those whom the flood destroyed, perished through unbelief. They despised the forbearance and long suffering of God, until the wrath which they had been treasuring up, suddenly consumed them. Here then, we have a revelation of the gospel plan—faith, with corresponding repentance, the condition of life; unbelief, with corresponding obduracy, the cause of condemnation.

We will consider the ground of Noah's faith, its influence upon his own conduct, and the blessed consequences which resulted from it in relation to himself and others.

I. The ground of Noah's faith, was the word of God. He was satisfied that the warning he had received of the approaching judgment was a divine revelation, and in compliance with the command which

accompanied the warning, he used the means that were appointed for the deliverance of himself and his house. He did not venture to argue from the past, the improbability of the predicted event. He did not stop to inquire by what means God would bring it about. He well knew, that what infinite wisdom had determined, infinite power could perform; and that when God had fixed upon an end, the means were always at hand.

This is in all cases a sufficient ground of faith. God has made a plain revelation of his purposes. He has told us of the coming wrath, and the way of deliverance. He has declared that the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the Heavens—the visible firmament—be rolled together like a scroll; that there shall be new Heavens and a new Earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness; whilst the wicked shall be destroyed for ever. It is not for us to inquire *how* God will do all this, but whether he has determined to do it. If the truth of the

Bible is supported by incontrovertible proof, then faith is concerned with the *facts* of the Bible, whether past or to come, and not with the manner of their existence. It is therefore an evident absurdity to reject the future facts of divine revelation, because they have no precedents, or because our finite minds can not discover the means by which they are to be realized.

It is not true, however, that *our* future has nothing like it in the past; that there are no bygone events which resemble the events that are yet to occur. The gospel declares "that there shall come in the last days, scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." (2 Peter, iii, 3, 4.) It would not surprise us were we told that those who lived before the flood had made use of such an argument as this; but that any in these *last* days, with the entire history

and experience of the past before them, should rest their hopes of evading the divine judgments upon such a fallacy, betokens an extraordinary hardihood of unbelief. This language of defiance is based upon the supposed uniformity and stability of nature; but the records of the past prove that the assumption is false, and therefore the argument falls to the ground. Nature has not been always uniform in her movements. There have been wide departures from her accustomed sameness. The deluge was one interruption of nature's uniformity. The special agency of God in prolonging the light of day, when at the command of Joshua, the Sun stood still and the going down of the Moon was stayed, was another. And when Moses divided the waters of the Red sea, and smote the rock in the wilderness, he proved that nature's laws are under the control of the Being who appointed them, and that he alters their usual order or suspends their operation whenever it suits his de-

signs. All the miracles of the New Testament establish the same fact. The earthquake and the darkness at the crucifixion of Christ, and the other phenomena that were witnessed during his last days on the Earth, such as the opening of the graves and the revival of the dead, prove that all things have not continued invariably the same from the beginning of the creation. Here then we have the testimony of experience. This testimony sustains faith instead of conflicting with it, and settles the fallacy of the argument by which the scoffer persuades himself that he may safely disregard the threatenings of God.

If then in the time of Noah, when the testimony of experience was, perhaps, less decisive, men were required to believe the word of God, and were punished for their unbelief, how now, with their history and the history of all generations to prove that when God warns there is danger? Does any one hesitate to believe and obey, because

the future is unseen? Let him remember that the objects of faith are always invisible; for when things are seen, when the judgments of God actually descend upon the wicked, they become matters of bitter experience. And let him learn lessons of wisdom from the past. The past is a wise teacher, and they are wise who listen to its teachings. Every fact which the past furnishes, is an argument for faith. Every calamity that has visited nations or individuals, utters the warning, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." The judgments that have been and are, foreshadow the eternal judgments that are yet to be. Think of the false security of those who perished in the days of Noah. As little sign was there then of the approaching desolation as there is to the unbeliever now. The current of the world's affairs ran uninterruptedly on. They married and were given in marriage, "until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came and

destroyed them all." When the fountains of the great deep were broken up and the flood-gates of Heaven were opened, were they roused from their stupor; but conviction came too late—the last moment of opportunity had passed away, and the door was shut.

II. The influence of Noah's faith.

1. Upon his own conduct. "Moved with fear, he prepared an ark to the saving of his house."

It was what we would call an extraordinary faith. The whole testimony and practice of the world were against it. And as year after year rolled by, and the experience of the world seemed to deride the faith of the patriarch, and the revilings of the wicked doubtless became bolder and louder, he continued to prosecute with unremitting activity the work on which God had made his salvation to depend. And yet, extraordinary as this faith appears, it was only believing God rather than man.

The faith of every one who is rightly influenced by the truths of divine revelation, is equally extraordinary and equally simple. Take the case of the awakened sinner. He is moved with fear. The peace which he once had is gone. The feeling of security which once possessed his soul, has given way to uneasiness and alarm. He acts as if he were chained to some giant evil which he can not shake off—as if he were oppressed by an insupportable burden, or chased by some terrible apprehension. Once, free from care, he glided down the current of earthly pleasure. Sin had a charm for him then. But the calmness of that scene is broken up. There is a mighty struggle within. The waves of remorse are swelling over him, the sky is dark and lowering; and beset with a sense of danger, he is watching eagerly for a light which shall guide him into a peaceful haven. The world looks on in amazement. It is supposed that imagination has usurped the place of reason. The Sun shines

as brightly as ever on the sinner's path. No alarming providence has stepped in between him and happiness, and yet he is restless and concerned. The unbelieving deride his anxiety, but can not drive it away. Friends try to soothe him in vain. Why this extraordinary conduct? The whole matter is very simple and easily understood, if we remember that he believes God rather than man. The tranquility which he once had, was not founded upon truth—truth received into the mind and controlling the life. It was the tranquility of unbelief. But now, with an eye that others have not, he sees the dark cloud and the fierce lightnings of that wrath which he is conscious of deserving; and with an ear that others have not, he hears the voice of a broken law. To him the denunciation of that law is a sober and startling reality. And so is sin. And so is the misery which sin begets. And the wonder is, not that the sinner who thus believes should be roused to action, but that those

who credit the testimony of God even in a general way, should have so little fear of the wrath that will be revealed when the interpositions of grace are withdrawn.

So every effort that is made for the salvation of others, is nothing more than the expression of the concern which faith awakens. If the gain of the whole world is no compensation for the loss of the soul, we can account for it that Jesus wept over Jerusalem, and that Paul, moved by a powerful sympathy, was willing to make the largest personal sacrifices, if thereby he could secure the salvation of others. How do men toil and struggle to acquire earthly good! And this the world calls wisdom. There can be no extravagance here—no misplaced enthusiasm. Home and friends may be deserted, oceans traversed, health sacrificed and life itself periled;—the enterprises of the world, it is thought, are of sufficient importance to warrant any expenditure that can be laid out upon them. And why should

not Christian faith labor with still greater earnestness to secure its ends? Temporal calamities are deprecated, and every precaution is taken to guard against them. But what is the loss of fortune, the downfall of nations, the ruin of cities buried by some terrible convulsion of nature, compared with the ruin of the soul! Earthly splendor can be revived, earthly palaces can be reared again, but the loss of the soul is irreparable. Linked to eternity, it must be for ever happy or miserable there. And with its large capacities, how great will be its everlasting weal or woe! If faith then is right, in the estimate it forms of man's immortal nature, no effort of Christian zeal for the sinner's conversion can be extravagant. There is reason in every tear that is shed over the waywardness and unconcern of the human heart. There is reason in that agony of intercession with which the burdened soul sometimes pleads at the throne of grace for the Spirit's awakening and renewing

presence. If there were but one soul in the world to be saved, and the whole church were to plead and labor for the salvation of that one, the end sought would warrant the means employed to secure it. And if the church is not moved thus, it is because her faith is weak. O how do the tears and the toils of Jesus put to shame the indifference and inactivity of those who profess to have the same mind.

2. Noah's faith was a testimony against the world. All the actings of his faith condemned the unbelief of those who were at no pains to avoid the impending doom. For they had the same reason to credit the threatenings of God, which influenced his decisions, and governed his conduct. We may suppose that in this respect, they were without excuse. If God did not communicate his intention immediately to them, it is probable that Noah laid his credentials before them, and either by the working of miracles or in some other way, gave such

proof of his divine appointment, as ought to have satisfied their minds.

So the faith of every one who is induced to yield to God on the terms of the gospel, is a condemnation of the world's unbelief. Is the awakened sinner filled with fear? That very fear condemns the security and false confidence of the impenitent around him; for they have the same gospel, the same arguments, the same representations, both of their own characters, and the consequences in the future world that must inevitably arise out of their continued rebellion against God, and their persevering rejection of the overtures of divine mercy. They have listened, perhaps, to the same sermons that have persuaded others, and through which the divine Spirit has operated savingly upon other hearts.

And here we meet the question: Is the sinner responsible for his unbelief? We take the ground that he is. We take the ground that faith in those representations

which constrain some to yield to God, is the duty of all—that the same application of the mind to the great truths of the Bible, will conduct in one case to the same results as in another. The Bible is not defective either in the evidence by which its own authority is supported, or in that by which it convicts the sinner of sin. The nature of this evidence is referred to by our Saviour when he says: “Light is come into the world.” Who asks for labored proof that the Sun exists? So the truth of the word of God is seen and felt. It is such a revealer of the thoughts and intents of the heart; it places in such a strong and self-evident light, what every one knows or may know to be the peculiarities of his own moral nature, that with an unbiased mind, and with a determination to yield to evidence, he can not help being persuaded that it is a revelation from God. If he is kept away from the investigation because he hates the light, or if the love of evil causes him to

reject the evidence, this is a fault of the will, for which the sinner is clearly responsible. If any fail to discern the appropriateness of the gospel remedy to their wants, or if they fail to discern the wants that have made that remedy indispensable, it must be because they shut their eyes. Nor is this mere assertion. The proof is found in the influence of revealed truth upon the great majority of minds. Even those who have not submitted to its power, are for the most part convinced of its reality. This is the case with almost every stated hearer of the gospel, who has not surrendered himself to its influence. The fault is found to be in the will. Duty is confessed, but not performed.

Whoever looks into this subject, will find that to be persuaded of the truth of the Bible, does not require labored investigation,—the labor devolves upon those who attempt to deny its truth. Unbelief has a hard task to perform, and it is becoming

more difficult every day. With the power of truth illustrated by so many examples, with the Spirit of truth working upon so many hearts, and with the history of the entire past as a witness for what God has declared in his word, it is hard to deny, but easy to believe. We say then, the concern of every awakened sinner reproves the false confidence of all who have not been roused by the same considerations that have moved him.

Thus, also, every believer by the obedience of faith condemns the disobedience of unbelief. The same reasons are given for obedience in the one case as in the other, and the same help is extended. If the believer has been prevailed upon to love God and to secure an interest in Christ, by motives drawn from the divine word, others ought to be influenced in the same way by the same motives. If any imagine that on the last day they will plead their inability, as a reason for their disobedience, let them remem-

ber that the compliance of many who lived, when they lived on the Earth, who heard the same statements of duty and the same arguments for its performance, will bear testimony against them. The plea of human inability is taken away by the provisions of divine grace. The gospel is the power of God. Its light is intended for every mind, its renewing influence is offered to all; and if any do not live the life of faith in the Son of God, it is because they will not come to him. Disobedience is something more than the passive submission of the soul to the power of evil; it is the resistance of what is good. The convictions of duty are suppressed. The efforts of the Spirit are repelled. Of those who do not love and obey it may be said: "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." And who is responsible for that corrupt bias of the will, which, by a most determined and active opposition, defeats every agency which infinite compassion employs to bring the sinner back to the path

of duty? Every one therefore who has surrendered his heart to God, is a witness against those who refuse that submission. The godly life of every follower of Christ is a testimony against every neglecter and violator of his commands.

It is worthy of remark here, that a holy example is the most powerful of all the rebukes that impiety can receive. Sin may be denounced in words, and yet encouraged in the actions of those who thus reprove it. But thus if the inconsistency is discovered, the sinner who observes it will never be convinced of sin by admonitions, however pointed and truthful, that are not enforced by example. Purity of life is an important instrumentality in the renovation of the world. And he who carries his religion with him every where, and exemplifies its reality and its power in every action, is enforcing the duty of others by unanswerable arguments—arguments that can be seen and felt, and which will be sure to be appreciated.

But it must not be forgotten that all are responsible for their own actions even when extreme wickedness prevails, and though corruption should predominate, as it has in the church itself. Men may be saved under these circumstances. They may be righteous, as Noah was in that generation. Some pretend to justify their impenitence, on the ground of the inconsistency of others, who profess to love God. But this is one of the subterfuges of the great adversary of souls. This is one of the refuges of lies, in which he would persuade the sinner to hide himself.

3. The consequences of Noah's belief in his relation to God. "He became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

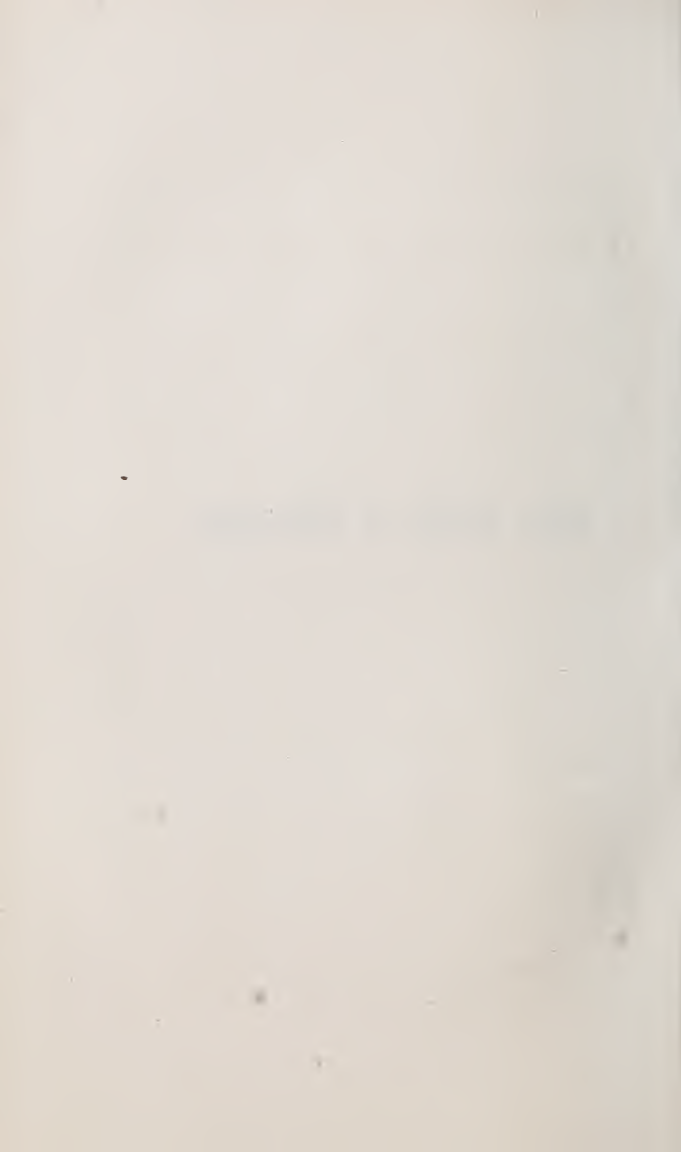
And how is the soul to be justified now? By the righteousness of faith—faith in the great sacrifice which has been offered for sin. "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of

God abideth on him.” Christ is the ark, and every sinner that would be saved, must take refuge in him. The storm is gathering, but that ark will ride securely amid the raging of the elements of wrath, and though the waves may swell and beat around, and the lightnings flash above, they will not be able to hurt those who have taken shelter here. They are members of the body of Christ, and if the head is safe, the members will be safe. Washed in the blood of the Lamb, the justice of God will have no claim to present, that has not been settled, the holiness of God will find no impediment that has not been removed.

And this is the only expedient. A Jewish writer represents Noah expostulating from the ark with those who were excluded. They thought they would be safe because they had adopted other means. This was their plea. But Noah reminds them that no other method of salvation had been appointed by God, and as they had neglected

and despised that, they deserved to perish. To many, the gospel refuge may appear as incompetent to human salvation, as did the provisions of the ark to those unbelievers. They may imagine there are other methods equally good or better. With Naaman they may say: "Are not the rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel?" But let such remember, that God has appointed but one expedient. He will not parley with men on a subject like this. Nor can they escape if they neglect so great salvation.

The Faith of Abraham.



THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM.

“By faith, Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. By faith, Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said that in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead.” HEBREWS, XI. 8-10, 17-19.



ABRAHAM was the founder of the Jewish nation: the representative of the church and people of the true God. Other believers there were before, and even during his time, for we read of Melchizedec the priest of the

Most High God, who blessed the patriarch, and whose priesthood Abraham acknowledged by giving to him tithes of all the spoils taken from the kings who had imprisoned the family of Lot. Nevertheless God selected Abraham as the individual through whom the promise of the Deliverer was to be transmitted to future generations, and through whom the Deliverer himself was to come. With Abraham the covenant was sealed by the rite of circumcision, which was appointed as the sign and the assurance of the gracious purposes of divine mercy. It is interesting to notice the manner in which that covenant was ratified. Abraham was directed to take "an heifer of three years old, and a she-goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtle dove, and a young pigeon." Having done this, a deep sleep fell upon the patriarch, and God made to him a full discovery of his purposes in regard to himself and his seed, the slavery and sufferings of his posterity, their deliver-

ance and settlement in the land of Canaan. And as the sign that all these purposes would be fulfilled, "it came to pass, that when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces." This was the testimony of divine approbation, the pledge that all which God had promised would be performed. This significant proceeding reveals the ground on which all the promises of God to the sinner rest. There can be no agreement without sacrifice; without the shedding of blood there can be no remission of sins. A truth so impressively set forth—a truth so often reiterated—a truth that was perpetually represented in the sacrifices of that economy which was afterwards introduced through Moses—a truth repeated as often as the bread is broken, and as often as the wine is poured out in the Lord's supper, must hold a prominent place in the wonderful scheme of human restoration. It constitutes indeed—as from the

intimations referred to we might suppose it would constitute—the leading feature of the gospel. That gospel is but an exhibition of Christ and him crucified. This is the burden of all its revelations, this is the foundation of all its promises. Thus it behooved Christ to suffer: this was the condition on which the success of his enterprise depended; and to rise from the dead the third day. The death and resurrection of Christ constituted him the way of approach to God: they opened a door of hope, a channel of negotiation: so that repentance and remission of sins might be preached among all nations.

Abraham was also the representative of Christ's spiritual seed. *These* were to be multiplied as the stars of Heaven. Christ refers to the distinction between the natural and spiritual seed of Abraham, in the case of the Roman centurion: "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, that many

shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of Heaven; but the children of the kingdom (that is, many of the natural seed) shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." The Saviour alludes again to the same distinction in a conversation with some of the Jews, who urged, as an objection against his doctrine: "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man; how sayest thou then, ye shall be made free." To which Jesus answered: "Whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin. If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham." And Paul makes the same distinction, representing all the true followers of Christ as the children of Abraham, when he writes to the Galatians: "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Thus specially chosen as a type of all future believers, we have reason, in his case,

to look for extraordinary illustrations of faith. And these we find.

1. He became an exile from home at the command of God. "He went out, not knowing whether he went." He was probably ignorant of the resources of the country, he knew not the trials that would meet him there. He had no reason to suppose that the change, so far as his own worldly prospects were concerned, would be for the better. The promise of God referred to the future. The land of Canaan was to be the inheritance of his posterity. In all this, Abraham acted without any thought of present advantage, or expectation of personal gain. We must suppose also, that if he had the ordinary sensibilities of human nature, there were strong ties and powerful associations which bound him to the land of his birth. These had to be severed. And whilst the promise of God referred chiefly to the posterity of Abraham, he was plainly told that they would suffer all the afflictions

and wrongs of slavery for four hundred years before the iniquity of their oppressors would be full. To have acted thus with reference to the future, without any prospect of personal advantage, and with the certainty of a long delay before any permanent advantage would be secured to his posterity, must have required a strong faith. Many become voluntary exiles now, but it is with a view to immediate and personal gain. The individual who leaves his home to amass wealth, is persuaded in his own mind that the chances of prosperity are in his favor. With him it is a business calculation. The severance of home ties and old associations, is a part of the investment from which he expects to derive profits that will abundantly remunerate him for all the sacrifices he makes. Perhaps he expects to return after a few years, and enjoy among former associates and familiar scenes, the hard-earned fruits of his enterprise. Could he be assured that the sacrifice he is making would bring no

immediate returns — that even his children would derive no benefit from it — that at most it would be of advantage only to his distant posterity after a lapse of centuries, there is no man of the world in his sober senses, who would be stimulated in the path of worldly enterprise by an object so far off. If there is any undertaking that deserves to be ranked with that of the Patriarch, it is the undertaking of the missionary of our own times, who consecrates himself to his work without knowing whither he is to go. He may be sent where disease will be almost sure to meet him. He may be sent where the untamed dispositions of savage men will place his life in constant jeopardy. Surely the change in his case does not promise any personal advantage. There is nothing in the missionary work to excite cupidity. Beyond the supply of his daily wants, the missionary receives no pecuniary recompense. Talents that might obtain wealth at home if devoted to some worldly calling, are employed abroad

without any expectation of wealth — nay, with the certainty of many privations — and employed too with a diligence that could not be quickened by the largest and surest prospects of worldly gain. For what does the missionary labor? Not for himself, but for others : not always with the certainty, or even the probability of present results. He may have to toil for years amid many discouragements, and may not live to see any of the fruits of his efforts. His enterprise, like that of Abraham, is connected with human civilization and progress; with the deliverance of the soul from the captivity and punishment of sin. His hopes depend upon the sure promise of God. His is emphatically a work of faith; of faith deriving its encouragements from the Bible, and from the manifest energy that resides in the principles of the Bible. He goes forth to take possession of the world in the name of Jesus, to plant the church and establish the worship of the living God. The world needs men of

this character; men of strong faith and elevated piety, to take the lead in the colonization of remote territories. There are men enough who are attracted to these territories by the love of gain; who go as mere adventurers, impelled by the sole desire of personal aggrandizement, and often without any scruples as to the means by which that object is gained. There are indeed honorable exceptions. But how few, animated by the faith of the Patriarch, and having the same enlarged and disinterested views of duty, go for the single purpose of scattering the blessings of civilization and christianity. The missionary enterprise ought to be regarded with favor by all nominally christian governments. The distant territories of this government need something more than standing armies to protect their inhabitants from lawless violence. They want the gospel. They want the institutions of the gospel. And if they have them not; if infidelity and irreligion are allowed to go hand in hand with

emigration, and to be planted and grow and spread their influence, every increase of territory will only augment the difficulties of legislation, and add to the expenses of the country by demanding the support of hired soldiers to prevent the outbreaks of insubordination; and will at the same time endanger our political institutions by increasing the weight of empire, while there will not be a proportionate increase of moral power to sustain it. Standing armies can never civilize the world. They are apt to be more prolific of evil than of good. They are more likely to sow the seeds of vice, than to give encouragement and protection to virtue. The christian family is the most powerful instrument of civilization; and every christian home that is planted in distant colonies, is a warrant for the progress and the permanency of the interests of these colonies.

2. Again, Abraham followed entirely the leadings of Divine Providence, and thus gave another illustration of his faith. He did not

complain of his lot. He did not venture to question the wisdom of God in commanding him to dwell in a strange land, without any fixed abode. Why? Because he believed this arrangement to be part of a plan whose results were to stretch into future and eternal ages. He looked for a city which hath foundations. He looked for consequences of infinite value to himself, and of infinite importance to the world. This was the support of his faith; the promise of God that his fidelity would be rewarded, and that it would be fruitful of unspeakable blessings to all coming generations. Having this promise, he was willing to labor in any sphere to which the providence of God might call him; he was willing to suffer any privation which the wisdom of God might appoint. It mattered not to him whether his station was high or low, so long as he had the assurance that his instrumentality would be honored and recompensed.

In this respect should every believer imi-

tate this eminent example. He should not aspire to a higher place than it is evidently the will of God he should occupy, nor covet a lower with fewer responsibilities. All who have a vigorous faith will labor diligently in the sphere to which the providence of God has called them. If the individual who possesses such a faith is required to make sacrifices, he will do it cheerfully in view of the "great recompense of reward." If persecution meets him, he will be supported by the assurance : "Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake." If his lot is cast in a heathen land, he will obey the summons, though it separates him from home and friends, looking forward to the intercourse of heaven. If he has wealth, he will lay it down at the Cross. If his position in the world is humble, he will labor with no less confidence of important results, knowing that the influence of the most obscure believer is a link in the grand chain of influence which in the end is to bind the world to God.

Many betray the weakness of their faith by their attempts to get rid of duty. How often do we see those who profess to believe, unwilling to go where God would lead them. How sadly have the interests of the Church suffered for want of self-denial in its members. What faith demands, is entire consecration. What faith demands is that you should go wherever duty calls ; that you should do whatever duty requires. You are to study the indications of Providence. Every where are you to perform the work of faith: in the family, in the sunday school, in the church, in the world, in every department of usefulness to which you have access. If such a faith were in all its members, the church would be resistless, and the world would soon be converted to Christ.

3. The faith of Abraham staggered not, though all outward appearances were against it. When a hundred years old, he was yet childless, and still he believed the promise: "A father of many nations have I made thee."

(Gen. xvii, 5.) But the offering of Isaac was the crowning exhibition of his faith. At last the child of promise was born; and the Patriarch trained him up for the high purpose to which he was called. But after a few years, during which the growing piety of Isaac strengthened the hope which his birth had created, the command came: "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering." No sooner was the command given, than it was obeyed. No doubt crossed the Patriarch's mind. No despondency took possession of his soul. With a firm reliance upon the faithfulness of Him whose wisdom had appointed this new trial, he was ready to make the sacrifice, "accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead." We are not to suppose that God gave to Abraham any intimation of his purpose to countermand the order. Abraham's confidence rested upon the original promise.

He felt assured that this could not fail, and he was but little concerned about the manner of its accomplishment.

Too often is the believer disheartened by the difficulties that impede the progress of the gospel. He seems almost to imagine that God has forgotten his promise, or that unforeseen chances of defeat have arisen, which were not reckoned when the promise was given. The example of faith we are now contemplating, is intended to rebuke this want of confidence in the wisdom and power of the Almighty—that wisdom which foresees all contingencies, and that power which is able to meet them. He who has fixed upon the plan of this world's recovery, is both wonderful in counsel and mighty in working. No unforeseen event—no event for which he has not fully provided, can come between his cherished purposes and their accomplishment. Even when appearances are against his designs, all things, not excepting those which seem to be most un-

favorable, are working together for the advancement of these designs. Of this the death of the Son of God was a striking and illustrious proof. With a faith less strong than that of Abraham, the disciples of the Lord were filled with dismay at this event, whilst the very cause of their disquietude was the only ground of human hope and salvation. Faith, when properly exercised, believes that all things are possible with God. No cloud of fear crosses its vision. It sees the end just as clearly as if it were already here.

The apprehensions of the believer often arise from his inactivity. Abraham not only believed, but obeyed; and whilst his faith produced obedience, it was his obedience undoubtedly that imparted strength to his faith. He knew that God's purpose would be accomplished, but he knew also that God works by means, and he looked for results only in the faithful use of the instrumentalities which God had appointed. It is no

wonder that the faith of believers should stagger, when their own hearts are cold, and they are doing nothing for Christ. They may well tremble for the growth and prosperity of the church, if they are doing nothing to build it up. They may well tremble for the souls of the unconverted, if they are not lifting a hand to save them. Let Christians remember that the only way to secure a strong faith, is to render an active obedience to every requirement of duty. If you would have strong confidence in the converting power of the gospel, labor to bring others under its influence. If you would have strong faith as a parent—if you would believe that the conversion of your children is possible—labor for their conversion. If you would have strong faith as a member of the church, and if you would entertain the constant expectation of its enlargement, then labor for its prosperity. If your faith is weak, it must be because your obedience is not earnest. Remember that

God has given you a work to do—each one of you, and that the degree of your faith in his promises depends upon the degree of diligence with which you execute his commands.

There are three other weighty lessons enforced by this example.

1. The heavenly, like the earthly Canaan, is a gift. “Eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

It was God’s promise that encouraged Abraham to take up his residence in a strange country. Had the right of occupation depended upon a price at his hand, he would have despaired of the purchase. Had it depended upon his efforts, or the efforts of his posterity to establish this right, either by conquest or negociation, in all probability he would never have thought of the enterprise; but it was the sure promise of God that nerved him for the course of action he pursued.

The doctrine of free grace is sometimes

charged as the source of idleness; but it is the only doctrine that can rouse man to proper action as a moral being, and call forth his efforts for his own salvation and the salvation of others, because it is the only doctrine that administers the hope of success. Tell the sinner that he must purchase heaven; and if he knows himself, he will despair of ever obtaining a place in the kingdom of God. But tell him it is a gift to be bestowed on certain conditions with which, by the grace of God, he may comply, and you open at once the door of hope; you encourage activity in the race set before him. Let an individual feel that he owes a debt which he can never pay, and that after all his exertions the law will still hang over him with its demands, and it will be likely to arrest all his efforts; he will not make an attempt that must be utterly useless. But let some generous friend cancel the obligation and set him free from the law's demands, and all the energy of his character is at once revived.

Such is the influence of the doctrine of free grace upon the mind of the enlightened sinner. Under the law, justification is hopeless; and why should he attempt what he can not accomplish? The law discourages effort, because no amount or kind of effort which the sinner is able to make can satisfy the demands of the law against him. But the doctrine of free grace nerves him to action, because it opens the prospect and holds out the promise of success. He who would not venture to do, may venture to believe. He who felt the paralyzing presence of despair in his soul when commanded to render perfect obedience to a law which condemned all his actions and all his thoughts, and which can not relinquish a single one of its claims, now feels the invigorating presence of hope stimulating him to action, when he sees a deliverer whose interference has been approved of by the law, pointing to a new and living way, and proffering all the help that the sinner requires to enable him to walk therein.

Say not that the doctrine of free grace encourages inactivity. The struggles of the awakened soul to break the fetters that bind it to earth and sin; all the exercises of the believer's mind, and all the actions of his renewed life; the diligence with which he prosecutes the business of his salvation, and his ceaseless endeavors to make his calling and election sure, bear a different testimony. The doctrine that inspires hope, is the doctrine that impels to action.

The doctrine of free grace operates thus beneficially also in constraining the believer to put forth his efforts for the salvation of others. This doctrine has founded the church in the world, and is the source of all its benevolent operations. And why does the church labor for the world? Because it believes that the happiness and salvation of man fall in with the purpose of the grace of God. Look at what christian faith has done; at the beneficial changes it has wrought, and is working now. Think of what the world

has been without it, and of what it is at this moment, wherever the agency of this faith is not laboring for the improvement of the race. How disinterested and universal is its benevolence ! It brings relief to the poor. It carries joy to the disconsolate. It lights the torch of truth in the midst of the darkness of heathenism. Through the instrumentality of the Reformers, it effected a revolution which gave the warrant of liberty to Europe and the world. It has always been the advocate of human rights, and the promoter of human happiness. And what is it doing now ? It is sending forth missionaries and bibles and tracts to civilize and evangelize the nations. So far from giving encouragement to inactivity, the doctrine of free grace is the only doctrine that can constrain any one to act for the good of others, because it is the only doctrine that utters the sure promise of success. The gospel is all free grace ; and the gospel alone can bless and save the world.

2. Faith is a practical principle. Be-

lieving as he did, there was nothing extraordinary in the conduct of Abraham. The motives presented to his mind were sufficient to justify its decisions, and to warrant the course of action he pursued.

Faith operates just so in the enterprises of this world. A man will risk his fortune or his life, if he believes, even with some misgivings, that he will gain an advantage which will repay him for all his present hazard and toil. Were it not for this persuasion, what would be more amazing, what would be more unaccountable than the conduct of the adventurer who leaves his home, or the conduct of the speculator who invests all he is worth in a single speculation? Both these individuals believe that their plans will succeed, and bring in a harvest which will abundantly repay them for all their outlay of comfort and money.

The conduct of the believer is not wonderful, if we take into account the objects of his faith. It is only wonderful that men can

believe the Bible even in a loose and general sense, whilst their faith exerts so little influence on their principles and actions. We can account for it that Abraham should leave his country and sojourn in a strange land, while looking "for a city which hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God;" but it is difficult to explain how men can credit the great truths of revelation, and yet bow to the flesh and remain impenitent. It is difficult to explain how the believer can, in any measure or under any circumstances, shrink from responsibility, while the work and the reward are set plainly before him.

In this view of the case, the believer is saved by works; not without faith, but as the superstructure which has faith for its foundation. Abraham's works are thus represented: "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? Ye see then how that by works

a man is justified, and not by faith only" (James ii: 21, 22, 24). Paul, viewing the matter from a different point of observation, uses very different language: "For if Abraham were justified by works," says he, "he hath whereof to glory" (Rom. iv: 2). Still these two apostles mean the same thing. Paul's argument was intended to correct the views of those who held to legal justification; the argument of James was intended to point out the error of those who were satisfied with a lifeless and inoperative faith, a faith of the head and not of the heart. There is danger of leaning to the one or to the other extreme, and both extremes are to be carefully avoided. No one can be saved by works without faith, neither can any one be saved by faith without works. Works without faith would be a rejection of the offers of the gospel, while faith without works would be a denial of the obligations of the law. Both the law and the gospel must be supported, and the faith that saves the soul must bow to the authority

of both. The law is unchangeable; and the gospel throughout is a solemn and impressive sanction of the everlasting principles of the law. One part of this sanction is set forth in that requirement of the gospel: "Ye must be born again." Another part of this sanction is contained in all the precepts of Christ and his apostles, and also in the purity of their lives, their self-denial, the large sacrifices they made for the good of others, and their constant reference in all their actions to the will of God. In the epistle to the Romans, where the doctrine of justification by faith is discussed at large, Paul presses at the close the great duties of life; showing that the faith for which he contended, and to which he owed his own hopes, constrains those who are actuated by it to follow after holiness. And Christ says that whosoever gives to a disciple, as a disciple, a cup of cold water, shall not lose his reward. And again we are told, He that giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord. And the rich in

this world are charged to do good, to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

There is a recompense then for those services that are done for Christ; always bearing in mind that his blood renders them available by atoning for their defectiveness, and that they necessarily grow out of faith in him—faith producing love, and love stimulating to acts of gratitude.

We do not wrong in the least the doctrine of free grace, by the estimate we thus form of good works; for it is grace that renders them possible. It is grace that makes them acceptable. It was grace that gave to Abraham the promise. It was grace that produced and confirmed the belief of its fulfilment. It was grace that imparted that powerful conception of future good, which fitted him for every measure of present sacrifice. It was grace that implanted in his

soul that trust in God, which conducted him safely and triumphantly through all the extraordinary trials to which his faith was subjected. And if the believer now exercises a self denial equally illustrious, he has no honor, he has no praise separate from the grace that has formed within him the disposition to do the whole will of God.

Christianity is a sanctifying as well as a justifying scheme. The same faith that fills the soul with hope, inspires it with love—the love of holiness, the love of that Being who is infinitely holy and just, and the love of that law which is the expression of these attributes of the divine nature. Justification and sanctification, faith and love, trust and obedience are inseparable in the plan of reconciliation; and if we attempt to separate them in our estimate of Christianity, we frame for ourselves a defective system which can never save the sinner. A lifeless faith, which leaves the soul full of worldliness, is as great and fatal an error, as a

sole reliance upon works. This is the great lesson to be learned, that faith without works is dead, being alone; and that works without faith are equally dead, being alone.

3. The offering of Isaac was typical of the sacrifice that has been made for sin.

Trace the resemblance. Isaac was, in one sense, an only son. He was well beloved. He was offered by his own father. He was to die for no offense of his own. In this transaction, it is supposed Abraham saw the day of Christ, and was glad. When he received Isaac back from the dead, in a figure, as Paul expresses it, he had probably a prophetic glimpse of the death and resurrection of the Son of God. He saw, perhaps, with prophetic vision, the dying and the rising Saviour. He saw, it may be, the power of that death, and the power of that resurrection working out mighty changes in the world, planting the church, and attracting sinners every where to God. We can readily perceive how it was that Paul de-

terminated not to know any thing among men, save Christ and him crucified. How could he preach the gospel, and not preach Christ? How could he glory in the gospel, and not glory in the cross of Christ? What truth is of more importance to us as sinners; what truth is clothed with greater interest, than the truth that Christ died to save us? Look for a moment at the transaction which the offering of Isaac prefigured. Behold the fulfilment of this symbolic representation in the crucifixion of the Lamb of God. Isaac was spared the agony of a sudden bereavement, but God spared not his own Son.

“O Lamb of God, was ever grief, was ever love like thine?”


The history of the universe, so far as we are acquainted with it, presents no similar example. Justice claims satisfaction for human guilt; and God has found a ransom. Believe, and you are safe. Reject him who died to save you, and your own soul must suffer the inflictions of that wrath which

abideth for ever. Seek then until you find—if you have not already found—that faith which will lead you to Christ as your refuge and your example; that faith which will purify your own heart first, and then go forth to save others; that faith which will make you feel that you are not your own, and which will constitute your influence or part of the great aggregate of influence by which the world is one day to be brought under the dominion of Christ. O for such a faith here and every where; then would the righteousness of Zion go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.

Patterns for us.

PATTERNS FOR US.

HEBREWS, xiii, 7. "Whose faith follow."

 WE have abundant reason to be thankful for those holy examples with which the history of the church abounds. These examples are to be found in every age. Never has the religion of the Bible been without a witness of its regenerating power. Even when the standard of piety has been at the lowest, there have been individuals whose lives have afforded practical illustration of the purity of those principles which lie at the foundation of God's requirements, and which are set forth in the doctrines of the gospel. And when we come to particular ages of the church, how extraordinary are the displays of all that is lovely in character,

of all that is attractive in moral excellence, of all that is disinterested in human action. Take the age when Paul wrote, and when the apostles labored for the cause of truth. Consider the sacrifices they made, and the cheerfulness with which they made them. And consider the holiness of their lives, and how far they rose in this respect above the common level of the age. How large was their benevolence! How self sacrificing their zeal! How triumphantly they soared above the influence of every selfish motive, whilst, with the heroic spirit of their Master, they were ready to give up all that they possessed, for the general welfare, and counted not even their lives dear, if by such a sacrifice they might win souls to Christ, and advance the great interests of his kingdom among men! Now these examples, and all others like them, show that the rule of the gospel is not impracticable. They show that the self denial which the gospel requires may be exercised; that the

holiness which it commends, may be attained.

Without such illustrations of the influence of religion upon the hearts and lives of others, we might well doubt whether we could ever arrive at what Christianity requires us to feel and to perform. We are told that we must love the Lord our God with all the heart; but when we consider how wide a breach sin has made between the soul and its Maker, we ask, perhaps, is it possible to entertain this supreme love for the Almighty? Is it possible to be guided by heavenly, instead of earthly motives and rules of conduct? These questions are answered in the holy lives, and disinterested purposes, and heavenly affections of those who have lived by the faith of the Son of God. We see men like ourselves, having the same infirmities, exposed to the same temptations, beset by the same enemies within and without, reclaimed from the error of their ways, and brought back to the

path of obedience. We see them gaining one conquest after another over sin—we see them advancing in the path of holiness and self denial, until sin appears to have nearly lost its power, and self is absorbed in a supreme regard for the will of God and the well-being of humanity. Now when we witness these examples, we are not merely to wonder. We are not to satisfy ourselves with admiring the strength of the principle to which others have yielded, and the excellence and beneficial effects of the piety which they exemplified before the world. But we are to yield to the same principles; we are to cherish the same love to God which animated them, and we are to labor as they labored for the progress of truth and righteousness in the earth. “Whose faith follow: considering the end of their conversation.”

This is a command to the church, and to every individual belonging to the church.

In this passage we are directed to most eminent examples of holiness and zeal, as

patterns for our imitation, and also to the source of the power which will enable us to copy after their lives.

We are not required in this passage, you will observe, to exercise an implicit trust in the opinions of those, who, whilst they profess to be spiritual guides, are themselves blind leaders of the blind. The church has sometimes put itself in opposition to the word of God, teaching the traditions of men instead of the doctrines of that word. The faith of the church has not always been the faith of the Bible. And yet, whilst there existed this disagreement between the teachings of the one and the revelations of the other, men were told that they must receive the church's interpretation, and not presume to question its correctness, although they might be persuaded in their own minds of its being at variance with the plain sense of the word of God. It was so in the time of Christ, when the Scribes and the Pharisees put the ceremonial above the moral

law, and when they so explained the requirements of the latter, as to open the door for the violation of its most important precepts. And it has been so since. But in all questions of faith, the Bible is to be our guide; and in all differences of opinion, or disputes concerning that faith, the Bible is to be the ultimate and only acknowledged standard of appeal. No set of men calling themselves the church, have any right to step between my understanding and the plain doctrines of revealed truth, as a medium of interpretation, claiming authority from on high for such interference, and requiring my unqualified assent to their expositions of scripture doctrine. God holds every one responsible for his own belief, and therefore he addresses the truth to every individual mind, and addresses it so plainly, that the sinner who is honestly and earnestly seeking the way of life, or the believer who wishes to determine any case of conscience, or any question of duty, needs no

other interpretation than that which the spirit vouchsafes to the earnest and prayerful reading of the word of God. True, ministers are appointed to instruct others, but ministers and their teachings are to be tried by the standard of eternal truth. To this even the Saviour appealed. He required men to believe his sayings, because they agreed with what God had already revealed. "Search the scriptures," said he, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." There is nothing therefore in the gospel, to encourage or sanction a blind adherence to the opinions of others. We are to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good. We are to adopt no man's faith as our own, except so far as it agrees with the law and the testimony of God.

Neither do the words we are considering, authorize us to imitate the failings that are more or less mingled with all Christian excellence. The patriarchs and prophets and

apostles were not perfect men. They had their faults, but these faults did not belong to their faith, but rather proved that their faith was not as powerful and as constant in its influence over them as it should have been. Now there are those who appear to think that when the Bible holds up the examples of holy men for our imitation, it commends their deficiencies as well as their virtues; and the persons who entertain this opinion are almost sure to copy the flaws which they discover, and refer to these as an apology for their own sins. Defects are to be found in all examples. And they serve an important purpose. They teach us that the most holy men have had to wrestle with the same temptations that beset us, and to contend with the same moral corruption to which we are subject. But these defects are no warrant for our deficiencies. If Jacob supplanted his brother, and obtained his father's blessing by means of fraud, this certainly does not legalize false-

hood, or make it right, on any occasion, to deceive. This was the fruit of his unbelief, and had nothing to do with his faith. And if Peter denied his Master, it was because, at that moment, his faith was weak. Whatever is wrong in these examples, we are to avoid; whatever is right, is intended to stimulate our faith and to elevate our piety.

This passage holds out no encouragement to the lukewarm professor of religion, or to that member of the church who lives in the constant neglect of duty. They have no right to rely upon the short-comings of others as an excuse for their transgressions. And yet how many pursue this course. How many imagine that because David sinned, they may safely pass by his virtues, and imitate his faults; that because holy men have had their imperfections, they may follow their violations of duty without aspiring to their holiness. Said Paul in his letter to the members of the church at Corinth, "Be ye followers of me,

even as I also am of Christ." There was an ultimate moral standard to which he referred, one beyond and above himself by which he wished his own faithfulness to be tried—the perfect pattern of Christ.

What then are we to follow in these examples? We are to imitate the fervor of their piety. We find that there was earnestness in their religion. It was a flame that burned perpetually and brightly in the soul, with some intermissions it is true, but not subject to that frequent and almost utter extinction which we too often witness among those who bear the name of Jesus and profess to have his spirit. If we would learn what was the nature of David's faith, let us listen to the expression of that faith. We find that it led him to perform faithfully the duty of prayer. Morning, noon, and night did he call upon the name of the Lord, under a sense of his frequently returning wants. Sin was ever nigh, and every moment did he feel the need of divine help.

And mark the earnestness of his petitions: "Unto thee will I cry, O Lord, my rock: be not silent to me; lest if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit. Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee, when I lift up my hands towards thy holy oracle. Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity." There is none of the sluggishness of indifference, none of the coldness of formality here. We feel that we are in the presence of a man who loved to hold communion with his God. There is a beseeching importunity, and often an agony of intercession which bespeaks the intense desire of the heart. What fervor of devotion breathes in every song of praise, what a lifting of the soul to Heaven! David was sometimes in darkness, but he could not remain content, as many do, whilst the countenance of God was turned away from him. If he had grieved the Spirit, he gave himself no rest until by humiliation and re-

pentance he had brought him back again to his disquieted soul.

Go into that upper room in the city of Jerusalem, where Peter, and James, and John, and other disciples abode, and what scene do we witness? "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren." This was an earnest faith, a fervid piety. They remembered the promise of Christ, "that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you;" and they were resolved to secure for themselves and the world, whatever was consolatory and whatever was valuable in this promise. And how, suppose ye, did the early Christians act in view of that command, rendered more solemn and subduing if not more imperative by the circumstances under which it was delivered? "This do in remembrance of me." The same record informs us that "they continued stedfastly in the apostles'

doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." They did not attempt to evade the duty imposed by a divine ordinance. Why should they? With a fervid love for Christ, it was a privilege, not a hardship to meet him at his table. And sympathizing as they did with those who loved the same Saviour, and were pledged to the same interests, they delighted in the communion of the saints. In the fervor of their devotion, therefore, in the intensity of their affection for Christ and his ordinances, should we follow the believers who have gone before us.

But we should also imitate their fidelity in promoting the interests of the race. The patriarchs, prophets, and apostles were evidently under the impression that they had been raised up for a special object, and they acted in view of that object. If they were not men *of* the world, they were men *for* the world—the very men the world needed at the precise crisis when each one was ap-

pointed to fulfil his mission. Trace the career of Moses the Jewish lawgiver, and mark how well he acted his part, and how important was the part he acted. What might have been the result upon the world's progress, had he been faithless to his trust? But he rose, by divine grace, above the power of the most extraordinary temptations, and kept his eye intently fixed upon the single end which he had been sent to accomplish, the deliverance of a nation from political and moral bondage.

Now there is always a crisis in the world's affairs, which calls for action; and there is always an important part which every believer may, and ought to perform, towards the world's deliverance. Every believer is raised up for a special object, and that object is indicated by his position in life, by the amount of his wealth or influence, or other opportunities of doing good unto others. Let the circle of his influence be ever so circumscribed, if there is but one

soul among the millions that inhabit the earth upon which he can act beneficially, his mission is to act upon that one. Some are appointed to fill a large sphere, like the prophets, the apostles, or the reformers; others are appointed to occupy a sphere of duty and influence more limited; the true wisdom is, for each one to be sure that he fulfils his course, whatever it may be. Had Moses lived in comparative obscurity, his faithfulness would have been illustrated there. Had John, the forerunner of Christ, occupied any lower position than the one he so honorably filled, the stern integrity of his faith would have been visible there. And had Paul moved in the most limited sphere of usefulness, his zeal would have found objects on which to act for the glory of God and the salvation of men. What every believer wants, is, the *fidelity* of these devoted servants of Christ; having this, it will not fail to find opportunities for its manifestation. Were there more of the

spirit of their faith in the churches, there would be more of its fruits. It is not because Christians do not occupy exalted stations, that so little is done for the world and the souls of men, but, because there is a lack of fidelity in the places which God has assigned them.

Follow then the faith of the prophets and apostles, in their active devotion to the interests of mankind. Did God call them to perform a great work, so has he called you. I need not attempt to describe the work of the believer: this would be impossible; but you can judge what it is, as God lays it before you in the opportunities of every day and every moment. At one time it may be to reprove sin; at another, to instruct the ignorant; at another, to encourage the desponding; at another, to confirm the wavering. The duty of one day, may be to aid in sending the gospel to the heathen; the duty of another, to promote its extension at home. In every duty, think how the

prophets and apostles would have done, and follow the actings of their faith. You have no right to be less devoted to the cause of truth and the welfare of men. That cause has lost none of its importance, and the soul has lost none of its value, by the lapse of time.

We are encouraged to hope and labor for the highest attainments in holiness. There is no good reason why we should not be as holy as the best of men. If we are not, the fault rests with ourselves, and the cause is to be found in our neglect of the means. The prophets and apostles were but sinful men, with as little natural claim to holiness as other men possess; and it was the grace of God which made them what they afterwards became. That same grace is offered to each one of us: we may be favored with its highest manifestations; we have only to ask, and we shall receive; we have only to cultivate the gracious affections bestowed upon the soul in conversion, and they will

be enlarged, and elevated, and purified more and more. The great difficulty with many, is, they are satisfied with low attainments in holiness: they do not, like Paul, press on toward the mark: they loiter by the way; they sit down in the race; they think that because they have outstripped others, they are holy enough. But surely, they who thus think, and thus act, are not obeying the injunction of the apostle.

Were those righteous men, whose examples we are commanded to imitate, ever satisfied with their spiritual progress? Hear David: "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." Hear Paul: "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before." So strong were their desires after more holiness, that all their past attainments deserved, in their eyes, only to be forgotten; there was always a returning thirst which former supplies could not satisfy. If we would follow

their faith, we must emulate their holiness; like them, we must set the highest of all examples before us, and strive to be pure, even as the Son of God was pure.

We are encouraged to hope and labor for great results, as the fruit of our instrumentality. What may not Christian faith, even now, accomplish. If the prophets and apostles and reformers effected much, we are to remember that they were but instruments in the hands of a higher power, and that that same power may give extraordinary success to our agency. Many do not labor at all, because they doubt their own efficiency, and think they can do nothing; but they forget "that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong." It is "the right hand of the Lord, and his holy arm that have gotten him the victory." Holy men of old undertook great things, because they knew the Lord was working. Let the church recognize this agency, and act accordingly, and who will undertake to designate the limits of her power. May

not the Spirit of the Lord be called down every where, by her prayers; and may not sinners be converted every where, by her fidelity? Let the church's faith be strong, and her agency for good must be wide and powerful.

There are voices urging us to greater faithfulness; the voices of every age. And there is one voice, that we should heed above all others. It is the voice of him who died for the world. If we are his followers, let us strive for more of his Spirit, that we may labor as he labored for the prosperity of Zion, and the deliverance of those who are now under the dominion of sin. When the whole church, as one man, shall plead with the earnestness and importunity of that faith which will not be denied, and labour with the determination and perseverance of that faith which will not be defeated, then the time to favor Zion will speedily come, and the whole Earth will see the salvation of God.

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